

PUBLISHING'S MOST POWERFUL WOMAN
John Walsh interviews Gail Rebeck
THE MAGAZINE

HOW CLINTON NEUTERED THE FEMINISTS
Ugly truth from the front line
FEATURES, PAGE 19

SUZANNE MOORE: WHY I HATE COOL BRITANNIA
Just a dated PR stunt from the 1980s?
COMMENT, PAGE 23

HAS TIGER LOST SIGHT OF THE BALL?
Golf's top earner runs into the sand
SPORT, TIME OFF

THE INDEPENDENT

Saturday 4 April 1998 70p (IR70p) No 3,576

Newspaper of the Year for photographs

Thousands of animals to be infected in BSE experiment

By Anthony Bevins
Political Editor

Exclusive

A HUGE seven-year programme of experimentation and research into mad cow disease, involving hundreds of cattle and sheep and thousands of mice – some of them, genetically-engineered – has been quietly launched by the Government.

One Whitehall source told *The Independent*: "We are leading the world on research into BSE, which is quite right because we did, after all, give the world BSE in the first place."

The Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food (MAFF) was reluctant to divulge details of the programme, which could ultimately cost more than £150m.

But *The Independent* has been told that work is being done at two sites. A number of "discreet" buildings have gone up on an estate run by the Central Veterinary Laboratory Agency, near Weybridge, Surrey – where experiments and research are being carried out into the origins of BSE, and its effects on animals and people.

One source said there were 700 cows there. Other research is being carried out at a ministry site near Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwickshire.

Because the work involves infecting cows, sheep and mice with BSE and scrapie, the Government is probably concerned about the prospect of animal rights protests, and people living nearby might also become concerned for their safety. It is thought that residents in the Weybridge and Stratford areas are largely unaware of the nature of the BSE research.

A MAFF spokesman said that up to the end of last month, the Government had spent a total of £80m on research into BSE. No firm estimates are available, but the new research programme could eventually cost twice as much again. *The Independent* has been told that it is proving "a massive drain" on the MAFF budget.

Conditions at the two sites

are so restricted and secure that there is little human contact with the infected animals and there is an on-site veterinary hospital to deal with unrelated sickness or injury.

The ministry spokesman said work included "looking at the scrapie strains in sheep" to see if any of the strains were similar to BSE. Other work involved seeing how mice reacted to BSE. "Some of the mice have been engineered to be biologically similar, in the way they react to BSE in cows."

Government sources say that the research programme was initiated last August after the Spongiform Encephalopathy Advisory Committee (SEAC) had urged greater co-ordination of effort.

The Independent has been told that work now being carried out is so thorough that the scientists are trying to nail down the actual source of BSE.

While the official view continued to maintain that the source was cattle feed, and that was the consensus in SEAC, all possibilities were being seriously examined. Going right back to scratch, the research teams are ruling nothing in, and nothing out – and they are even examining the theory, presented to the BSE inquiry this week, that the disease might have been caused by organophosphates.

In similar vein, maternal transmission and the contamination of milk are also being examined – in spite of all previous research showing no evidence for concern.

The final fence for Britain's favourite chaser



Last hurdle: Brian Harding brings One Man, Britain's most celebrated jumper, over the eighth fence before he fell at the next fence and had to be put down during the Melling Chase at Aintree on the eve of today's Grand National Report. Time Off. Photograph: Allsport

Optimism grows for Ulster deal

By David McKittrick
and Fran Abrams

THE MOOD surrounding the Northern Ireland talks process lightened appreciably yesterday, with a growing optimism in the air that a deal could be reached by the deadline date of next Thursday.

Several previously pessimistic close observers and participants reported a distinct improvement in the atmosphere as the talks entered their final phase. A weekend of intense activity is now anticipated.

The key to the final stretch centres on the talks chairman, the former US senator George Mitchell, who was last night distributing a final working paper to the parties involved. A draft copy had been given to the British and Irish governments, and was the subject of talks yesterday between Tony Blair and the Taoiseach, Bertie Ahern.

This weekend Mr Mitchell is to meet all the parties for negotiations with the intention of producing a draft of a settlement document on Monday. He has already urged the parties to view next week as a time when they should "eat, sleep, negotiate".

Mr Blair and Mr Ahern had three brief meetings on the fringes of the Asia-Europe meeting, which both were attending. They were being kept informed of developments as officials continued to negotiate over the draft agreement. After a 10-minute meeting in the morning and a very brief session at lunchtime, they spent half an

hour together before going to a dinner at Buckingham Palace.

Mr Blair's official spokesman said the real differences were not between the British and Irish but between other parties in the talks process. "We don't deny there are considerable differences that have to be overcome, but there is an absolute determination within the time we have got left to get this thing sorted," he said.

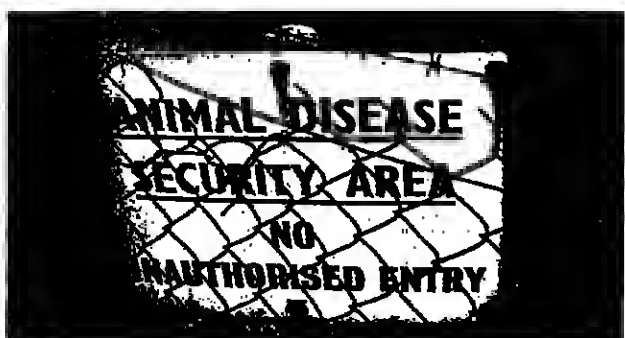
The feeling grew yesterday that while many key details remained to be resolved none of those involved appeared to be on the point of denouncing the shape of the expected package.

Exchanges, some of them sharp, continued publicly, but sources said serious business was being carried out within the talks. All parties, including Sinn Féin, were said to be immersed in the details of a possible deal.

Mo Mowlam, Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, said yesterday: "We are still negotiating the detail, everybody is now engaged in the real crunch issues... there are still differences, but the areas where there were differences is declining and it's next week that counts, not now."

She predicted negotiations would go "right to the edge," adding: "There are areas of differences but areas I think can be settled within the next six days. No one will get 100 per cent of what they want, but they will get something they can live with."

March banned, page 6
Leading article and letters, page 22



Keep out: Secret research into BSE is under way at two sites

Today's news

Modigliani sale

A MODIGLIANI owned by Sir Robert and Lady Sainsbury is to be auctioned at Sotheby's later this year to raise money for a Japanese cultural studies centre at the University of East Anglia. Page 3

Parents' night off

HEAD teachers yesterday called for annual parents' meetings to be abolished, saying that they created excessive bureaucracy. Page 5

Price of fame

DIRECT LINE is refusing to arrange household insurance for customers who know famous people such as politicians. The company says the risks of a celebrity having an accident in the homes of such policyholders are too great. Page 10

Death camp sale

JEWISH groups in Germany want action to prevent striped uniforms worn by concentration camp inmates being sold at auction. The uniforms are the property of a collector with extreme right-wing sympathies. Page 12

Jail for sculptor who stole body parts

By Kim Sengupta

CREATING sculptures out of snatched body parts may well be art, but it is also a crime, as Anthony-Noel Kelly discovered yesterday when he was sentenced to nine months in prison in a landmark court case.

The 42-year-old nephew of the Duke of Norfolk aspired to be a new Leonardo da Vinci. But sentencing him at Southwark Crown Court, London, Judge Geoffrey Rivlin QC, said the theft of human remains "was revolting, an affront against every

reasonable concept of decent behaviour. The offence was a gross breach of trust".

At the end of an extraordinary trial the jury had taken seven hours to find Kelly and his accomplice Neil Lindsay guilty of the theft of human remains donated to the Royal College of Surgeons. Lindsay, who had smuggled "shrivelled" dismembers out of the college, received a six-month sentence suspended for two years.

The police investigation into the affair began after a report about Kelly's artistic endeavours in the *Independent on Sunday*.

Kelly and Lindsay made legal history as the first body-snatchers in Britain to be convicted of "stealing" human remains following Judge Rivlin's ruling that dead bodies can be subject to ownership and therefore subject to theft.

In the past, body-snatchers had been charged with the offence of outraging public decency. Lawyers for the two men said they would be taking the matter to the Court of Appeal to reverse the new rulings and overturn the convictions. The

judge refused to release Kelly on bail pending the outcome of the appeal.

Kelly and Lindsay, a former undertaker's embalmer and junior technician at the RCS, had stolen up to 40 body parts, many of which were produced in court as evidence. Among the haul were three heads, three torsos, parts of a brain, six arms and an assortment of legs and feet. Kelly carried the remains away from the RCS in his rucksack, often travelling on the Tube back to his home in Clapham, south London. Some of the body parts were buried

in the grounds of his family's estate at Romden Castle in Kent. Other parts were kept at the London home of a female friend, and one leg was stored in his attic.

Kelly, a former sculpture tutor at the Prince of Wales's Institute of Architecture, placed a price tag of £4,500 on two silver-gilded studies of an old man's head and torso. He had paid Lindsay £400 for his assistance. However, the court was told his finances were "very precarious indeed".

Maestro of the macabre, page 9

Woman who tried to sell Diana letters held at Waterloo

By Kim Sengupta

THE WOMAN at the centre of the controversy over attempts to sell to a newspaper love letters from Diana, Princess of Wales to James Hewitt, was yesterday arrested by Scotland Yard officers.

Italian born Anna Ferretti, 39, a former fiancée of Mr Hewitt, was taken away by detectives for questioning as she was about to board a train to France from Waterloo International station in London. She will be

interviewed over the alleged theft of the letters which were offered to the *Mirror* newspaper.

Kensington Palace refused to comment on Ms Ferretti's arrest. However, the developments are being monitored by lawyers for the Princess's executors. There is the likelihood of a legal dispute over the ownership of the letters. The copyright belongs to Diana's estate, but Mr Hewitt is expected to stress that they were sent to him, and are thus his property.

The bundle of 62 letters had been stored for four years at former Army officer Mr Hewitt's home in Devon before they disappeared while he was on a trip to Spain. In one of them, sent while Mr Hewitt was serving in the Gulf War, the Princess had asked her then lover to destroy them, saying: "Please can you burn my letters after reading them in case they get into the wrong hands – please".

Ms Ferretti, according to newspaper reports, had expressed regrets over her alleged attempts to cash in on the let-

ters. She is quoted as saying: "People may see what I did was wrong. I now see how stupid I have been, but I am also very relieved they are back with the rightful owners. They were beautiful letters written by a caring woman who was deeply in love. Now she is gone, it is only right these mementos should be with her sons".

The letters are now in safekeeping at Kensington Palace after being handed over by the *Mirror* pending possible legal action. Ms Ferretti is said

to have claimed that Mr Hewitt himself wanted to make money from the love letters in the future, but this has been vehemently denied by him.

Scotland Yard said it had begun investigations after a complaint by Mr Hewitt.



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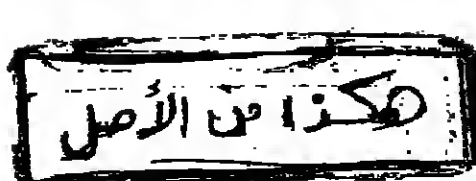
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Child killer to be tagged on release from jail

By Jason Bennetto
Crime Correspondent

THE NOTORIOUS child-killer and paedophile Sidney Cooke is to be fitted with an electronic tag to enable police and probation officers to keep track of him after he is released next week.

Cooke has also agreed to be supervised by the probation service and will be housed in se-

crete accommodation at a secret location outside London.

The Home Office has contacted probation leaders throughout the country in an attempt to find a place where Cooke, aged 68, can be kept under surveillance by the police and safe from vigilantes.

The elaborate arrangements are needed because of a loophole in the law that allows Cooke and five other danger-

ous paedophiles to be released from jail without supervision.

It is understood that the police have forced Cooke to co-operate and voluntarily go to a secure hostel or unit after threatening publicly to disclose his whereabouts if he simply left jail and moved into private accommodation.

By agreeing to be fitted with an electronic tag - devices which are being increasingly used to monitor crim-

inals, the police will be alerted when he leaves his accommodation and can ensure he does not go close to areas containing schools and playgrounds.

Cooke has refused to have any clinical treatment, but is believed to have become increasingly fearful for his safety once he leaves jail after serving 11 years of a 16-year sentence.

No suitable secure housing could be found in London,

where Cooke - who comes from Hackney - wanted to stay, so he is being sent to his second "choice". He is due to be released on Monday but the authorities are expected to try and slip him secretly out of Wandsworth jail in south-west London without alerting journalists and demonstrators.

The authorities are desperate to avoid the public hysteria that followed the release of

Robert Oliver, who along with Cooke was part of the paedophile gang that raped and killed 14-year-old Jason Swift. Police in Brighton were powerless to act as they watched Oliver contact a convicted paedophile and then visit a library and the seafront to watch children. He later had to go into hiding and stayed in a police cell for about four months at a cost of about £100,000 before agree-

ing to receive treatment at a private clinic.

The cases of Cooke and Oliver highlight the difficulties the authorities face with a dealing with sex offenders who are not covered by tough new laws. There are 150 offenders currently in prison who will escape any control when they come out of jail. About six are considered to be extremely dangerous. Offenders covered by the

new legislation, which came into force in October 1992, can be forced to have treatment, stay in secure accommodation and be supervised by probation officers.

The Association of Chief Officers of Probation yesterday urged the Government to set up a "national co-ordinating board on dangerous sex offenders" to draw up a national practices and treatment of people sentenced before 1992.

IN TOMORROW'S INDEPENDENT ON SUNDAY

■ **Chernobyl Legacy:**
A new catastrophe that threatens 50 million people

■ **Manhunting:** The organised way to find a husband

■ **Rupert of the Rhine:**
Can Muroch learn to love Europe?

■ **Terrible Teens:**
Sulky adolescents and the parents who endure them

■ **Fashion Special:**
Sixteen pages of the best in all-American style



IN MONDAY'S INDEPENDENT

■ **Exclusive series:**
Drugs, guns, knives, pornography...
the extraordinary life of William Burroughs, father of The Beats



CONTENTS

News	2-11	Business	24,25
Foreign	12-17	Shares	26
Features	18,19	Unit trusts	27
Arts	20	Sport	Time Off
Obituaries	21	Crossword	Time Off
Comment	22,23	TV & radio	The Eye



Recycled paper made up 41.4% of the raw material for UK newspapers in the first half of 1997.

Prescott dealt blow over housing plans

By Kate Watson-Smyth

JOHN PRESCOTT, the deputy prime minister, was dealt a double blow yesterday in the Government drive to develop parts of the green belt for housing.

The High Court ruled that he had failed to abide by the Government's own guidelines in giving permission for 113 homes to be built on a greenfield site at a south coast resort as Hertfordshire County Council announced that it had decided to delay plans for 10,000 houses to the west of Stevenage. The council will ask Mr Prescott to intervene.

The environmental group Friends of the Earth welcomed the ruling, describing it as "the first time that the Government has faced - and lost - a High Court challenge to a greenfield housing decision".

Mr Prescott, the Secretary of State for Environment, Regions and Transport, caused uproar in the Commons in February when he announced new

guidelines requiring 60 per cent of housing to be built on recycled land.

He has already been asked to intervene in the development of 1,500 houses in the Aire Valley, Yorkshire, and could be facing a flood of appeals from other councils as well as Hertfordshire.

But the Government has insisted that 4.4 million new households will be formed between 1991 and 2016 in England.

The plans to build 113 homes in Peachhaven, East Sussex, caused widespread local protests because they were said to threaten the only undeveloped piece of land between Worthing and Newhaven.

An 18.61 hectare plot at Valley Road was earmarked for up to 113ungalows and houses after planners identified "a shortfall" in the amount of land needed in the Lewes district for housing over the next five years.

But Mr Justice Harrison ruled yesterday that Mr Prescott

erred in law when he gave permission for the scheme last November.

He said the minister and a public planning inquiry inspector had failed properly to consider concerns expressed by Lewes District Council that the development would "seriously prejudice" the local authority's strategy of focusing local development away from the already over-crowded coastal strip.

He added that neither the inspector nor Mr Prescott had taken account of the Government's own guidelines that planning permissions should not be granted where they would predetermine or prejudice local strategic planning considerations.

After the hearing, Simon Festing, FoE housing campaigner, said: "He [Mr Prescott] cannot ride roughshod over the opinions of local people by allowing so much greenfield development. He must act now to lower rural house-building targets in the hard-pressed south of England."

Blair on the spot as Hague finds flexibility on unions

By Barrie Clement
Labour Editor

WILLIAM HAGUE is to signal another major shift in Tory policy towards the Government's proposed employment legislation with tacit backing for a law on union recognition.

On Monday in the Commons the Conservative leader will call for a stringent test of support before recognition is granted, rather than register his implacable opposition to the whole policy. Mr Hague will urge that half of the total workforce should vote for union representation before it is granted, rather than half of those who vote in a ballot.

His call echoes a argument made by the Confederation of British Industry in its submission to ministers, and places Tony Blair in a difficult position.

While the Prime Minister may favour placing relatively high barriers in the way of recognition - and will not be dis-comforted by siding with the CBI - he might draw the line at

agreeing with the Opposition. An intense debate over the proposed law has been carried on in private between union leaders and ministers.

Mr Hague's change of tack follows his comments recently that, while he opposed the introduction of a national minimum wage, he would not seek to repeal the law in government. His return to the theme of employment policy will come on Monday, when the Tories have chosen to debate union recognition.

Ken Jackson, leader of the Amalgamated Engineering and Electrical Union, accused the Tory leader of a retreat. "The road to Damascus is becoming congested. If this is the latest Tory U-turn, I welcome it." His organisation is currently threatening strike action in a recognition dispute at ADT Fire and Security in the run-up to the publication of the "Fairness at Work" White Paper, which will contain proposals for a union representation law. The newly

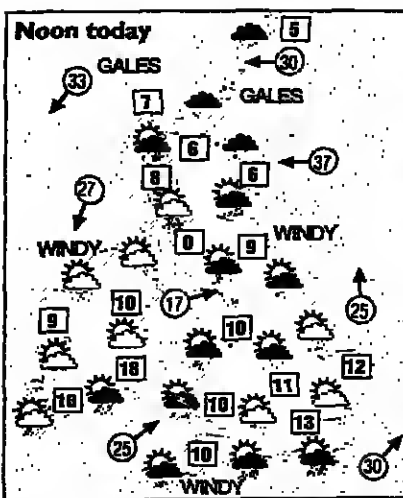
merged ADT has decided to withdraw recognition from the engineering union, claiming that it only covers 7 per cent of the new group's 4,400 workforce. The union however claimed that it represented 90 per cent of the engineers at one of the constituent companies and still has more than half at the new group.

The AEBU's dispute illustrates one of the other principal concerns expressed by trade unionists over the planned law. It is thought the Government might favour the CBI's contention that employers should be able to draw up the "constituencies" for ballots on recognition. In the ADT case the union believes the constituency should simply consist of engineers, but managers argue that it should involve the whole workforce. Unions are also concerned the Government may exclude small firms from the legislation and allow companies to lure employees away from collective agreements through personal contracts.



Fashion conscious: A model carries a baby down the catwalk, both wearing outfits by Isaac Mizrahi at the designer's autumn show in New York. Photograph: Reuters

WEATHER



Scotland will continue to see gales in the north and many parts of the UK will have a blustery day. Generally cloudy in Scotland with any sunshine more likely in the west. All parts will be showery. The showers prolonged and heavy especially in northern and eastern Scotland, but all parts are at risk of seeing a heavy shower. There is also the risk of thunder and hail in places, especially Northern Ireland, Wales and western England, where the showers may merge at times.

Outlook for the next few days

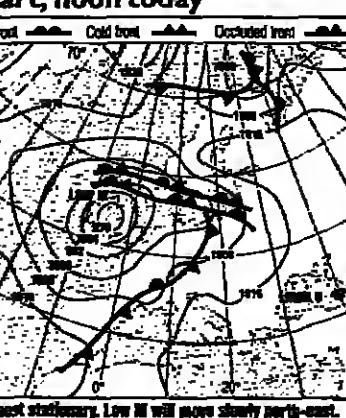
A blustery, showery day. Some sunny breaks will develop in western Scotland but the north and east will be dull. Some of the showers will be heavy but any snow showers will be confined to the northern part of the Highlands. The rest of the UK will also remain showery. On Sunday there will be less wind in Scotland. All parts are at risk of seeing showers but these will be scattered allowing longer sunny breaks to develop.

British Isles weather

Most recent figures for the last 24 hours. Cloudy, Clear, Rain, Fog, Haze, Mist, Frost, Snow, Sleet, Showers, Shower, Thunder.

Aberdeen	R 3 37	Glasgow	C 13 55
Aberystwyth	R 11 52	Inverness	R 3 37
Ayr	R 8 46	Leamington	F 12 54
Belfast	R 8 46	Leeds	C 10 50
Birmingham	R 11 52	London	F 11 52
Blackpool	C 10 50	Manchester	C 10 50
Bournemouth	R 7 45	Nottingham	R 14 57
Brighton	F 11 52	Sheffield	C 11 52
Bristol	F 12 54	Southampton	C 12 54
Cardiff	R 7 45	Stoke	C 10 50
Cardigan	C 11 52	Swansea	C 11 52
Doncaster	F 13 55	Teesside	C 11 52
Edinburgh	R 9 48	Wolverhampton	C 12 54
Exeter	R 7 45	York	C 5 41
Glasgow	C 5 41		

Atlantic chart, noon today



Air quality

Yesterday's readings

	NO _x	SO ₂
London	Good	Good
East of London	Good	Good
Wales	Good	Good
Central England	Good	Good
North of England	Good	Good
Scotland	Good	Good
N Ireland	Good	Good

Out and about with AA Roadwatch

Call 0335 401777 for the latest local and national traffic news. Source: The AA Roadwatch. Calls charged at 50p per min at all times (inc VAT).

High tides

	AM	HT	PM	HT
London	06:00	6.5	20:27	6.2
Liverpool	05:23	7.9	18:06	7.6
Avonmouth			13:30	10.3
Hull (Albert Dock)	12:42	7.4		
Glasgow	05:17	3.2	19:06	2.8
Dun Laoghaire	06:17	3.6	19:03	3.6

Lighting-up times

	20.06	5.47
Birmingham	19:48	5:33
Bristol	19:48	5:33
Cardiff	20:01	5:38
Glasgow	19:35	5:28
London	19:48	5:33
Manchester	19:50	5:35
Nottingham		
Sheffield		
Southampton		
Stoke		
Swansea		
Teesside		
Wolverhampton		
York		

Sun & moon

	Sun sets	Moon sets
London	19:30	12:08
Manchester	19:30	12:08
Nottingham	19:30	12:08
Sheffield	19:30	12:08
Southampton	19:30	12:08
Stoke	19:30	12:08
Swansea	19:30	12:08
Teesside	19:30	12:08
Wolverhampton	19:30	12:08
York	19:30	12:08

Animals dying in forest fires.



The fires in Indonesia are raging again, forcing animals out of the forests to die at the hands of poachers.

These forests are one of the last remaining habitats of the orang-utan, so this rare animal is now facing extinction. The life-saving rains may not come until October.

The WSPA-funded Wanarist Orang-Utan Rescue Centre has given sanctuary to hundreds of orphaned baby orang-utans, adult orangs, sun bears and many other animals. Now the Centre itself is threatened by the flames. The 3,500 hectare research forest around it has already been destroyed.

Please help us save the Centre, and the animals that depend on it, by sending a donation straight away.

WSPA is urgently sending food and veterinary materials to the Centre. Rescue teams are already risking their lives to save animals from the fires.

You can help save animals' lives.

Help WSPA save animals from death in the fires

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Jury clears man accused of growing cannabis

A MAN accused of growing and giving cannabis to his wife, a multiple sclerosis sufferer, was yesterday cleared by a jury's majority verdict of cultivating, cultivating with intent to supply, and supplying the drug.

Cap driver Alan Blythe, 52, of Runcorn, Cheshire, had used the defence of duress of circumstances, which the jury at Warrington Crown Court accepted.

He claimed he had grown the cannabis and supplied it to his wife Judith, 48, because he was afraid that without it the acute symptoms of MS could trigger her suicide.

The jury ignored the judge's suggestion that Mr Blythe had failed to prove duress of circumstances for the charge of cultivation. But they followed this advice in relation to possession, for which Mr Blythe was fined £100.

Afterwards, Mr Blythe said: "I don't know what to say. I am so relieved. I do not think the prosecution should have been brought. I think they should have dropped the charges when the defence asked them 10 months ago."

"They said it was going to be a waste of taxpayers' money and it was."

He said his wife, who was too ill to attend court and hear the verdict, had also been very relieved when he told her the news on the phone.

He vowed that he would not be able to stop supplying his wife with the Class B drug.

"I have never stopped giving her cannabis and I never will," he said.

The trial had heard that 10 cannabis plants, pots of cannabis bush heads and a variety of growing equipment were found during a police raid on the Blythes' house in July last year.

In evidence, Mr Blythe described how his wife was diagnosed with the debilitating and terminal MS in 1983, 15 years after they married, and her condition steadily worsened.

Prescription drugs did little to help and her main symptom, acute attacks of dizziness, culminated in one three-week period in 1989 when she was bedridden, virtually unable to move.

On Thursday, Mrs Blythe

told the court: "I had a very severe attack in 1989 and it was so severe I wanted to die. I wanted someone to kill me."

"I felt as though I had been thrown into a bottomless pit at 100mph and I couldn't even move my eyeballs. Every time I moved, I was back in this bottomless pit being thrown around."

Asked about what happened after the attack by defending counsel Andrew Mattison, Mr Blythe said: "We talked in depth about finishing her life and she said she would not be able to live through that again and, of course, I told her I could never kill her."

"After the worst attack she had, we discussed it over a period of months with me telling her I would definitely never be able to kill her. As time went by she told me that one of her friends, one of our friends, would help her to die... she made it clear she would die if she went through that again."

It was two or three years later that the couple tried cannabis after reading a magazine article discussing claims that it had beneficial effects for MS sufferers.



Sainsbury puts study of Japan in the frame

By Kate Watson-Smyth

SIR ROBERT and Lady Sainsbury are to auction a painting from their extensive collection to raise money for a Japanese cultural studies centre at the University of East Anglia. The oil by Amedeo Modigliani is to be auctioned at Sotheby's later this year and is expected to fetch between £4m and £6m.

Portrait of Baranowski was painted in Paris in 1918 and is considered one of the artist's most distinguished works. Sir Robert acquired it in 1937.

Sir Robert and his wife are already major benefactors of the university, having funded their entire art collection in 1973.

The Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts was opened to the public some five years later and also houses the school of world art and museology. The Modigliani was part of the original collection and has been on display at the centre since its opening.

Sir Robert has now decided to sell it to raise money for the Japanese unit.

Anne Ogden, spokeswoman for the university, said the Sainsbury Centre was due to celebrate its 20th anniversary next week.

"The original collection comprises thousands of paintings and sculptures. There are paintings by Henry Moore and Francis Bacon and artefacts from all over the world."

She said the university was chosen because Sir Robert's daughter, Annabel Kanuhus, studied maths and physics there in the late 1960s. "Sir Robert had already decided that he would like to give their collection to a university and have it displayed in a public building. He offered it to us and as we were a very new university at the time we were delighted to accept."

The original collection contains several Japanese pieces and Ms Ogden said that Sir Robert was keen to set up a research centre for Japanese cultural studies. "He is very interested in Japan and has been buying works from there for a number of years," she said.

Dame Elizabeth Esteve-Coll, adviser to the Sainsbury Collection and former vice-chancellor of the university, said the centre would provide a tremendous boost to the study of Japanese culture in Britain. Melanie Chorb, deputy chairman of Sotheby's Europe and head of the company's Impressionist and Modern Art Department in London, said: "It is a great privilege to be asked to sell such a beautiful portrait. It is double rewarding to know that the proceeds are going to set up such a worthwhile educational enterprise."

In his brief working life at the forefront of Parisian avant-garde, Modigliani established himself as one of the most important artists of the 20th century.

Portrait of Baranowski was painted two years before his death in 1920, aged 36. Baranowski was a young Polish émigré and, although he never wrote any verse, the painting has become known as *The Poet*.

Carpetbagger sets sights on RAC

By Kim Sengupta

THE ROYAL Automobile Club, Britain's oldest motoring organisation, was thrown into disarray yesterday after the outgoing chairman asked full members to vote to "dissolve" the club.

Taking his cue from the conversion of major building societies - such as the Halifax - to banks, chairman Jeffrey Rose proposed to the members of the club, based in Pall Mall, London, to sell their stake in the organisation in return for either stock market shares or cash.

Mr Rose wrote to all 12,000 full members saying "profe-

sional advisers will, of course, continue to be employed at every stage and its their preliminary view that a sum of £20,000 could be realised for each full member."

For a £620 signing on fee and another £600 a year, full members can take a quick swim in the sumptuous surroundings of the central London RAC Club, or swing their clubs at the luxury Woodcote Park country club, near Epsom, Surrey. Under Mr Rose's plan they would also see a 1,900 per cent increase in their investment.

It is not clear how the 6 million associate RAC members,

who pay between £29 and £150 for the breakdown service, would benefit. The RAC is rich - with annual sales of £300m it makes a pre-tax profit of £60m a year. Recently the club acquired the BSM empire of driving instructors for £54m.

The RAC management is less than pleased with the moves made by its chairman. A statement released yesterday said Mr Rose, aged 67, "will retire in May".

It adds tersely: "The letter was written without the knowledge or agreement of the Committee of the Royal Automobile Club or the Board of the RAC."

Queen of Aintree feels the heat from sisters eager for a place in the winners' enclosure

JENNY PITMAN goes for her third Grand National this afternoon. Julie Camacho goes for her first, in fact her first winner of any description. It is one of the charms of the Grand National that the world's greatest steeplechase can still be collected by the unheralded.

That cannot happen in the Derby, indeed, the Flat is a most barren land for women trainers. National Hunt racing is not so dominated by the dollar and offers greater opportunities for the little man or little woman.

Pitman is attempting to become an even littler woman and there will be a lot less of the "cuddly one" to observe in the winners' enclosure this afternoon should Nahthen Lad

IN THE NEWS WOMEN TRAINERS

be successful. But, while Pitman slims down there will never be any diminution in her achievements at Aintree. The Upper Lambourn trainer has won this race twice, with Corbiere and Garrison Savannah, and was also the steward behind Esha Ness, first past the post in the void race of 1993. Both her ex-husband Richard and son Mark have suffered narrow defeats as jockeys

in the race. When Pitman brings in her horses each autumn it is this single contest which preoccupies her mind as she casts her eye over a talented string. Since Lord Gulliver fell at the 13th in 1981 she has saddled a further 34 runners and completed just about as many interviews with Des Lynam. Her many strands with the National were undoubtedly the reason for her being appointed OBE last month.

The Queen Of Aintree has much female company this year, with five others of her sex launching themselves at the prize. According to the betting lists the greatest opportunity belongs to Julie Camacho's Avro Anson, although the horse's aversion to the

prevailing wet conditions is bordering on hydrophobia and he may be withdrawn.

Camacho has held a licence since New Year's Day, when she took over the reins at Star Cottage Stables in Malton from her father Maurice. She has yet to experience what it is like to welcome back a winner. An accomplished rider, Camacho is assisted by her husband, Steve Browne, a former pupil assistant with Luca Cumani, in the care of 29 horses.

Venetia Williams, the trainer of Celtic Abbey, too was an equestrian of some note, so much so that she is one of only 12 women to have ridden in the National. She is one of the 10 who failed to complete, in-

deed, the big race of 1988 was one of the few recent National denouements she failed to witness. Williams and Marcolo went their separate ways at Bocher's Brook and the rider was left unconscious on the floor. Two weeks later she broke her neck at Worcester, at the same time severing her connection with competitive riding.

She became her own boss in 1995, training from a base at Kings Cople, near Hereford. The results were stunning. This season she has trained 37 winners from 111 runners for a strike-rate of 33 per cent, a level of excellence unmatched by any trainer in the top 50. If Celtic Abbey wins, it will certainly be a red-letter day for his trainer. She

records all her winners with a red felt-tip pen and the losers in black.

The bookmakers will be in the black if any of the other three women-trained horses succeed. Fabricator, prepared by former rider Muriel Naughton, and Griffins Bar, who is sent out again by Pam Sly after falling at the second here on Thursday, have chances only slightly up from nil. Mary Reveley is the most successful female trainer operating today but her sights tend to be aimed at her local exotica of Sedgfield and Redcar.

For those who want to bracket the ladies together in a six-pack, Coral offer a price for the fairer sex. All their horses can run for you at a price of 7-1. — Richard Edmondson



Williams: Stunning record after setting up as own boss

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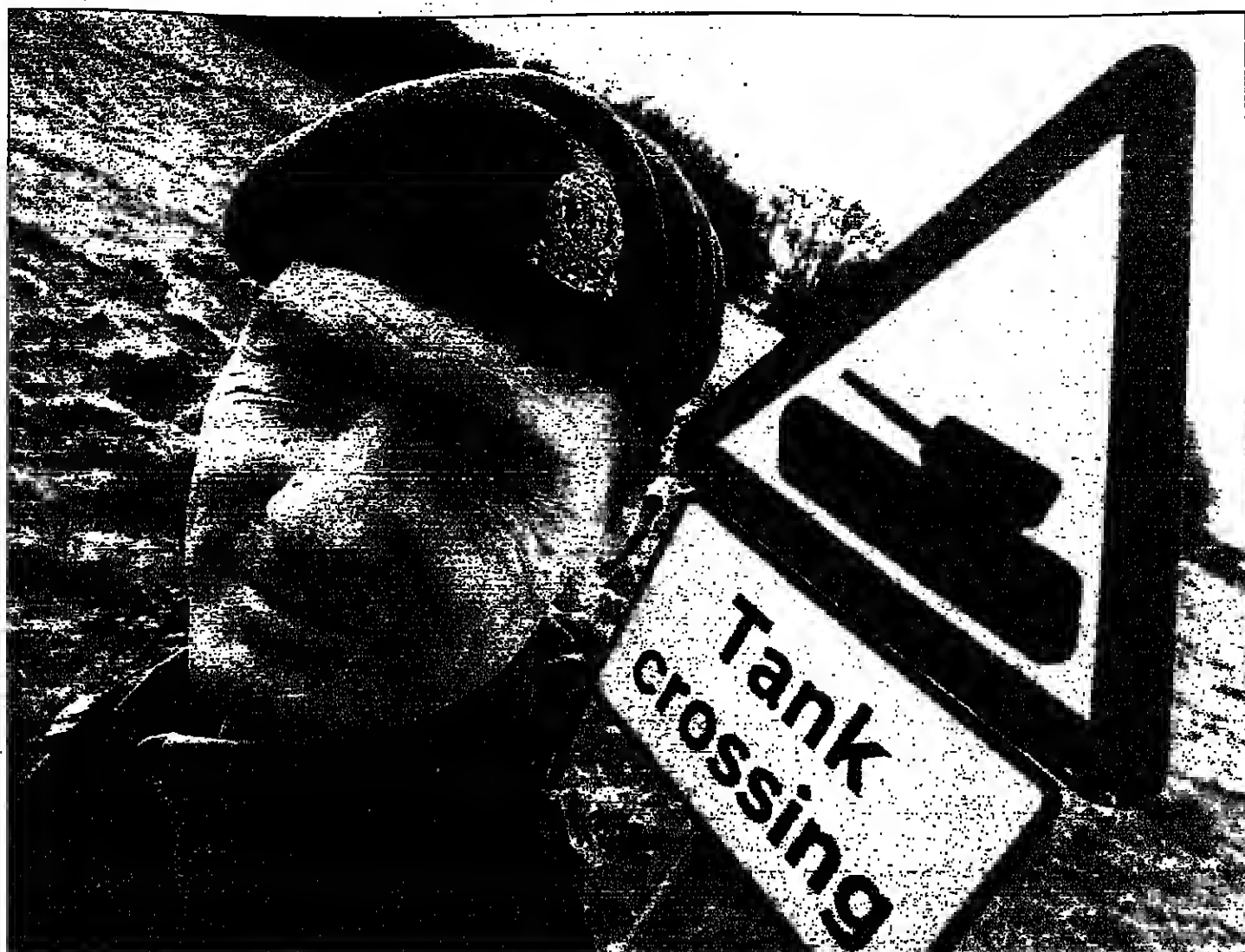


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Spring offensive: Major Eric Joyce, who is facing disciplinary action for criticising the Army's 'class-ridden culture' Photograph: Chris Ison

Heads want to axe parents' meetings

By Ben Russell
Education Correspondent

ANNUAL parents' meetings should be abolished to ease the burden of bureaucracy in schools, head teachers said yesterday.

David Hart, general secretary of the National Association of Head Teachers, said the meetings, which are required by law, were "the most wasteful use of time and resources devised" and should be scrapped. He said the meetings created hours of work for teachers and heads, but most parents failed to turn up.

Mr Hart said scrapping the parents' meetings would help to defuse the row over excessive bureaucracy which threatens to disrupt schools this summer. "Governing bodies are now stacked full of parents, and quite rightly so. And parents have plenty of opportunities to put questions to head teachers," he said.

Members of the National Association of Schoolmasters' Union of Women Teachers are expected to back a work-to-rule in protest at their workload which could mean teachers boycotting meetings and putting limits on school reports. The Na-

tional Union of Teachers will announce the result of a similar ballot on industrial action next week.

Mr Hart said the action threatened to derail the process of setting improvement targets for all schools which is at the heart of Government plans to drive up standards.

"Target-setting in schools might have to be sacrificed in the short term, until we have a solution to this problem," Mr Hart said. "The NAHT will be urging the Government to work with teachers and their unions as a matter of top-priority to find a solution to this problem, if possible during the summer term."

Annual meetings were often simply a formality, said. "Parents just don't turn up. I don't know of a single parents' body that supports a statutory annual meeting."

But heads and school governors "put in a lot of time and effort preparing for them, to very little effect. If the Government was willing to abolish the annual parents' meeting it would at least send a signal to teachers that they were serious about reducing unnecessary demands on their time."

The annual meetings are in ad-

dition to normal parents' evenings designed to let parents know how their children are doing in class. Government sources said no changes to the law on meetings were planned.

A spokeswoman for the Department for Education and Employment insisted that the Government had already acted to help cut red tape. She said: "The governing body of a school is accountable to parents and the annual parents' meeting is the only opportunity parents have to question the governing body."

Mr Hart said head teachers tried to keep bureaucracy to the bare minimum, but were bound by the requirements of legislation, quangos and local authorities.

He said the union would be advising heads not to confront teachers who refused to take part in meetings or complete paperwork, as long as the action did not affect discipline, teaching or pastoral care.

He said: "We do not want to see conflict between heads and teachers as a result of action to reduce bureaucracy. We have a common interest and we must not blame people within schools for the situation we find ourselves in."

Major digs in for battle over Army culture

By Kim Sengupta

TWO CONTRASTING faces of the Army's great modernisation drive were on show yesterday.

There was the launch of a £2.5m Saatchi and Saatchi-inspired recruitment campaign to shed the Army's image as a preserve of the white male. At the same time, the hierarchy faced a fresh challenge from an officer who claimed he had been suspended for advocating precisely the same reforms.

Major Eric Joyce, who was threatened with court martial for writing an outspoken criticism of class-ridden army culture, has updated the pamphlet which is being republished by the Fabian Society due to "high demand". He has also decided that if, as seems likely, his suspension is followed by dismissal, he will appeal to the European Court of Human Rights.

The legal action could be highly embarrassing for the Ministry of Defence. Major Joyce's public attack on what he saw as an outmoded system riddled with snobbery and prejudice incensed some senior officers and was expected to lead to a court martial. But there was a rethink after it became clear that if he were to take his case to the European Court he was likely to succeed.

Subsequently there appeared to be a u-turn by the Army hierarchy and Major Joyce was not only returned to duty, but his proposals for reforms were debated among fellow officers. He was also allowed to publish a journal, *The Armed Services Forum*, in which there were several articles by senior officers stressing the need

for the Army to evolve and change.

But at the end of last month, Major Joyce was told he faces administrative dismissal on the original charges of commenting to the media without approval and for "uncommandability". The matter is due to be considered by the Army Board within a month, and the Major is expected to be dismissed.

Major Joyce told *The Independent* yesterday: "In retrospect it seems that when they decided it would not be advisable to court-martial me, a few senior officers were determined the matter should not end there and I should be got rid of in some other way."

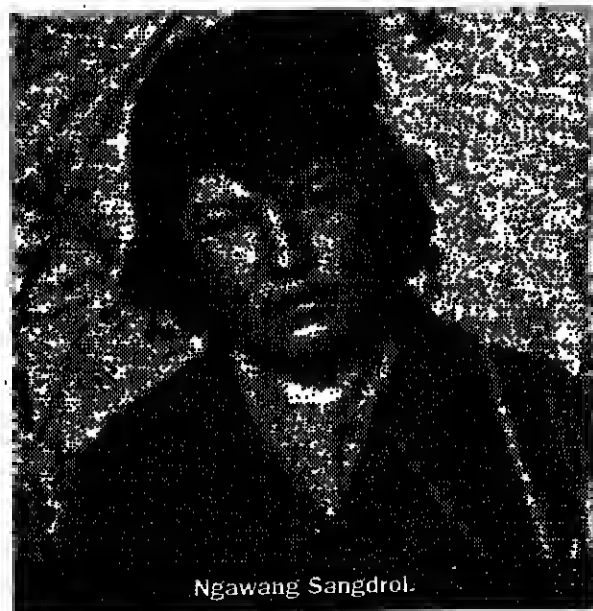
"I am hoping I will be allowed to address the Army Board to put forward my side of things, but there is a very real possibility that I will be administratively discharged."

"If that happens then we shall be taking the matter to the European Court. Ironically what they seemed to want to avoid in the first place is now likely to happen."

John Reid, the armed forces minister, who had met Major Joyce while in Opposition, yesterday launched the recruitment drive saying there had been a turnaround in perceptions of the Army, particularly on racial issues, and he was determined to build on that. Recruitment of women, who now account for 14 per cent of new intake, is also at record levels.

Dr Reid said: "The Army is back in business. There will be no going back on either of those. We want to best and brightest in the British Army irrespective of sex, irrespective of ethnic background and irrespective of social background."

'Free Tibet'. Two words that can get you nine years in a windowless cell.



Ngawang Sangdrol.

Originally imprisoned at the age of 13 for taking part in a demonstration, she spent 9 months in jail before the authorities decided she was too young to be tried. (But not apparently too young to be beaten up badly whilst she was there.)

Released, but unable now to rejoin her nunnery, she took part in another demonstration the following year. Arrested again, her sentence this time was 3 years in the notorious Drapchi prison.

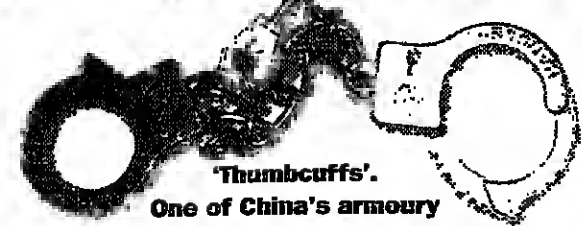
Yet this did not silence her. Quite the opposite.

Whilst in prison, she and 13 other nuns made a secret recording of National songs. And although the tape found its way outside, it also earned her another 6 years inside. (With no account taken of the fact that a UN ruling had declared her original sentence unlawful).

But even this failed to crush her spirit.

The electric baton. In a further act of defiance two years later, an act which was to add a staggering nine further years to her six year sentence, she shouted the words 'Free Tibet'. These words continue to re-echo around the world. They are words we know will one day lead to the

Yet it has never found the Tibetan people easily persuaded by them. As the experience of Ngawang Sangdrol, a Buddhist nun, so touchingly testifies.



'Thumbcuffs'. One of China's armoury of torture instruments.

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Policeman gets jail for taking bribes

A GARDA who took £16,000 in bribes from members of the gang alleged to have killed Dublin crime journalist Veronica Guerin was jailed for four and a half years by Dublin Circuit Criminal Court yesterday, writes Alan Murdoch in Dublin.

John O'Neill, 34, had admitted taking the money on dates between November 1995 and October 1996. He resigned from the force after his arrest in 1996.

The court heard the hand-over of some bribes was recorded by the gang on video and was given for future favours. Det Insp Tom O'Loughlin stressed O'Neill was never in a position to obtain high-level data.

In a statement, O'Neill revealed he took bribes of £100 to £5,000. They were paid in an attempt to obtain intelligence about investigations into a major Dublin drugs gang.

Two men accused of handing over the payments, Derek O'Driscoll, 24, and Anthony Long, 42, were each fined £50,000. A third, Patrick Ward, charged with making a £100 payment, was put on probation.

O'Neill, 34, who has three young children, had accumulated debts of £100,000 and was unable to manage his finances, the court heard. His debts were so large his net weekly earnings after repayments were just £8. In 1990 he won the top bravery award, the Scott Medal, after taking a shotgun from an armed robber.

A uniformed garda mainly involved in prosecuting traffic offences, O'Neill had joined the force in 1985. He is the first member of the force since its inception in 1922 to be convicted of bribery and corruption charges.

Revamped parades commission stops controversial Easter procession in Belfast as relatives of Bloody Sunday victims welcome investigation

Anger as loyalist march is banned

By David McKittrick
Ireland Correspondent

A PROPOSED loyalist march along Belfast's lower Ormeau Road on Easter Monday has been banned by the Northern Ireland Parades Commission, in its first adjudication on a controversial parade.

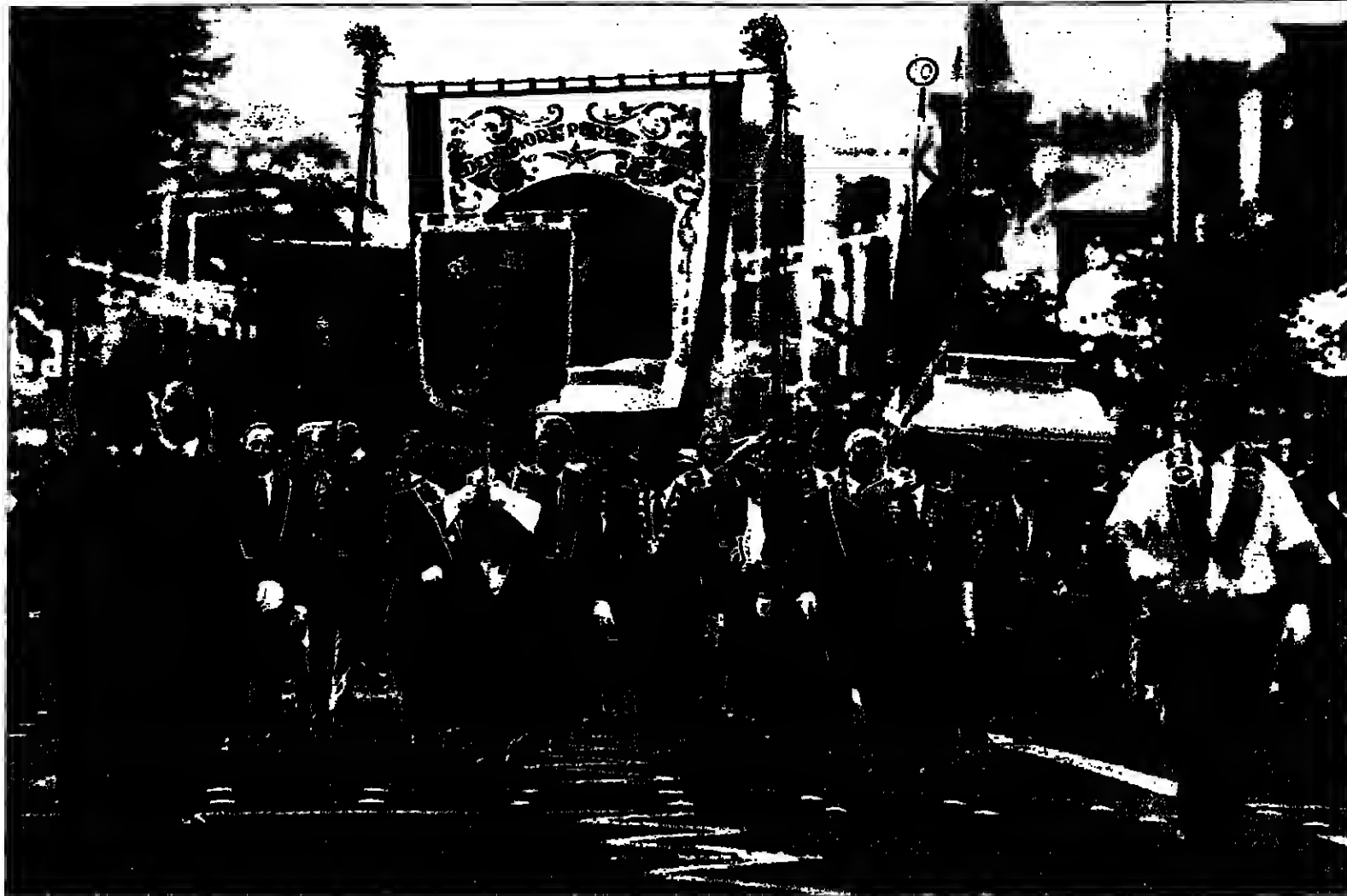
Earlier this year, a new law gave the commission powers to adjudicate on parades during Northern Ireland's often troublesome marching season. Its first judgment was yesterday criticised by the loyalist organisation involved, the Apprentice Boys of Derry.

The authorities hope the Commission's rulings will avoid some of the clashes which often attend the marching season, in which around 3,000 loyalist marches take place. Most are routine and pass off peacefully, but a handful can give rise to serious confrontations.

The Apprentice Boys have traditionally marched along the lower Ormeau Road in south Belfast, but over the years the area has become predominantly Catholic and in recent times opposition has mounted to their parading.

The Commission chairman, Alistair Graham, praised the Apprentice Boys for initiatives they had taken, but said that in the final analysis, the Commission had been most concerned at the impact a parade would have on relationships within the community.

The Commission said it believed the ground should be prepared for one or more parades to take place along the route during the summer, but said local people and the loyalist marching organisations needed to do more to create "the necessary atmosphere of sensitivity and tolerance that would permit this".



Unwelcomed Apprentice Boys from the Protestant upper Ormeau area marching down the Catholic lower Ormeau Road
Photograph: Pacemaker

Welcoming the decision, a spokesman for lower Ormeau residents said they were "absolutely relieved".

Loyalist critics of the decision, however, claimed it

amounted to capitulation to violence. The Governor of the Apprentice Boys, Alistair Simpson, said he was disgusted, adding: "Mr Graham has been bending maybe to those who are

hell-bent on bringing destruction to Northern Ireland. They are sidestepping the whole issue. What do we have to do to enable us to walk our traditional routes?"

Jeffrey Donaldson MP, who is both a leading member of the Orange Order and a senior member of the Ulster Unionist Party's talks team, added: "I am disappointed that the Parades

Commission have decided once again to give way to people who have threatened violence against this parade."

Later this month, the Commission is scheduled to an-

nounce its preliminary views on other parades in places such as Drumcree, Dunloy and Bellaghy. Each decision is likely to produce spirited criticism from one side or the other.

Decisions are open to High Court challenges, while in each case the Royal Ulster Constabulary Chief Constable, Ronnie Flanagan, can appeal to Mo Mowlam, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, asking her to overturn adjudications on public order grounds.

The key decision will concern the Drumcree march in early July, which is now thought of as "Drumcree 4" because serious confrontations have taken place there in each of the past three years. In each case, the march has eventually been shepherded through with the assistance of large numbers of police.

One widely-held theory is that the Commission will allow the Drumcree march to go ahead, but will seek to balance that decision by banning some of the earlier parades. Sources close to the Commission deny this, saying each march is to be considered under its own particular circumstances.

Leading article, page 22

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Second inquiry begins into Bloody Sunday

By David McKittrick

THE SECOND official inquiry into Bloody Sunday, when troops killed 14 civilians in one of the landmark tragedies of a quarter-century of troubles, formally opened yesterday at the Guildhall in Londonderry.

The first investigation, conducted by the then Lord Chief Justice, Lord Widgery, within months of the shootings, concluded that the firing of guns by some of the paratroopers involved had "bordered on the reckless".

The relatives of the dead, who yesterday staged a silent march to the opening hearing, hope that the new inquiry, headed by Lord Saville of Newdigate, will produce a more critical verdict than Widgery.

The new inquiry was announced earlier this year by Tony Blair following a lengthy campaign by the victims' relatives, human rights groups and the Irish government. Mr Blair said then: "The aim of the inquiry is not to accuse individuals or institutions, or to invite fresh retributions, but to establish the truth about what happened on that day, so far as that can be achieved at 26 years' distance."

In his opening statement, Lord Saville said he and his two colleagues, New Zealander



Lord Saville: Seeking truth

Sir Edward Somers and Mr Justice William Hoyt, a Canadian, would perform their duty with fairness, thoroughness and impartiality.

Mindful perhaps of accusations that in 1972 the then Conservative government had heavily influenced the course of the Widgery inquiry, he said: "I should make it clear that in no shape, manner or form has the Government sought... to suggest how we should conduct the inquiry or indicated what conclusions it would like us to reach."

Lord Saville said the tribunal had decided not to ask the Attorney-General to grant blanket immunity from prosecution to witnesses. He said it would

look again at this question during their proceedings, when it should emerge whether the granting of immunity in some cases might be necessary.

He added that the object was to "try and find out what happened on Bloody Sunday" and that immunity could be considered in certain cases if it brought the inquiry closer to the truth.

The Law Lord said it would be foolish to ignore allegations that some of those concerned in the events of Bloody Sunday were guilty of very serious offences, including murder, adding: "Whether there is substance in those allegations remains of course to be seen."

Following the formal opening of the tribunal, the three jurists visited the scene of the killings, not far from the Guildhall. It is believed the inquiry will start taking formal statements in the autumn, followed by hearings which could last 12 months.

Later, Sinn Féin chairman Mitchell McLaughlin said the relatives and others wanted to know how committed the Government was to bringing out the entire truth. He added: "I think the silence with which the opening statement by the tribunal chairman was met is very significant. Basically, people were burnt once and they are not going to be burnt again."

Belfast peacelines return to keep warring factions apart

IN AN ironic counterpoint to the present efforts to reach political agreement, the authorities in part of north Belfast have had to admit defeat and have begun building a new wall to keep warring factions apart, writes David McKittrick.

It will be the latest of around 30 "peacelines", a term which is itself ironic in that each structure amounts to an admission that community relations in an area have hit rock bottom.

"It's the story of north Belfast and the changing demographics," a veteran councillor said sadly. "The new wall is going up in the what used to be a Protestant area, but it's now a little Orange hibernia in a sea which is becoming increasingly green."

The new peaceline will be 200m long and in places be 6m high. It is to be erected in the White City area following continuing disturbances in the area, the RUC recording almost 300 separate sectarian incidents since January 1997.

The effect of these were described by Margaret Craig of Gurnell Hill who, after living in the area for 26 years, has found the last two years a nightmare. Of the wall she said: "To be

truthful I view it with a great sense of relief. I will possibly get peace to live this summer, and I and my neighbours won't have to go through what we went through last year - constant attacks on the back of my home."

"When the trouble was bad I actually had to be taken out of my house to stay with relatives, and come back the next morning to see what the damage was."

Although such peacelines were once viewed as temporary expedients, they have invariably turned out to be permanent structures. North Belfast was once mainly Protestant but is now predominantly Catholic, and it is the spreading out of the Catholic community which has triggered off many of the territorial disputes.

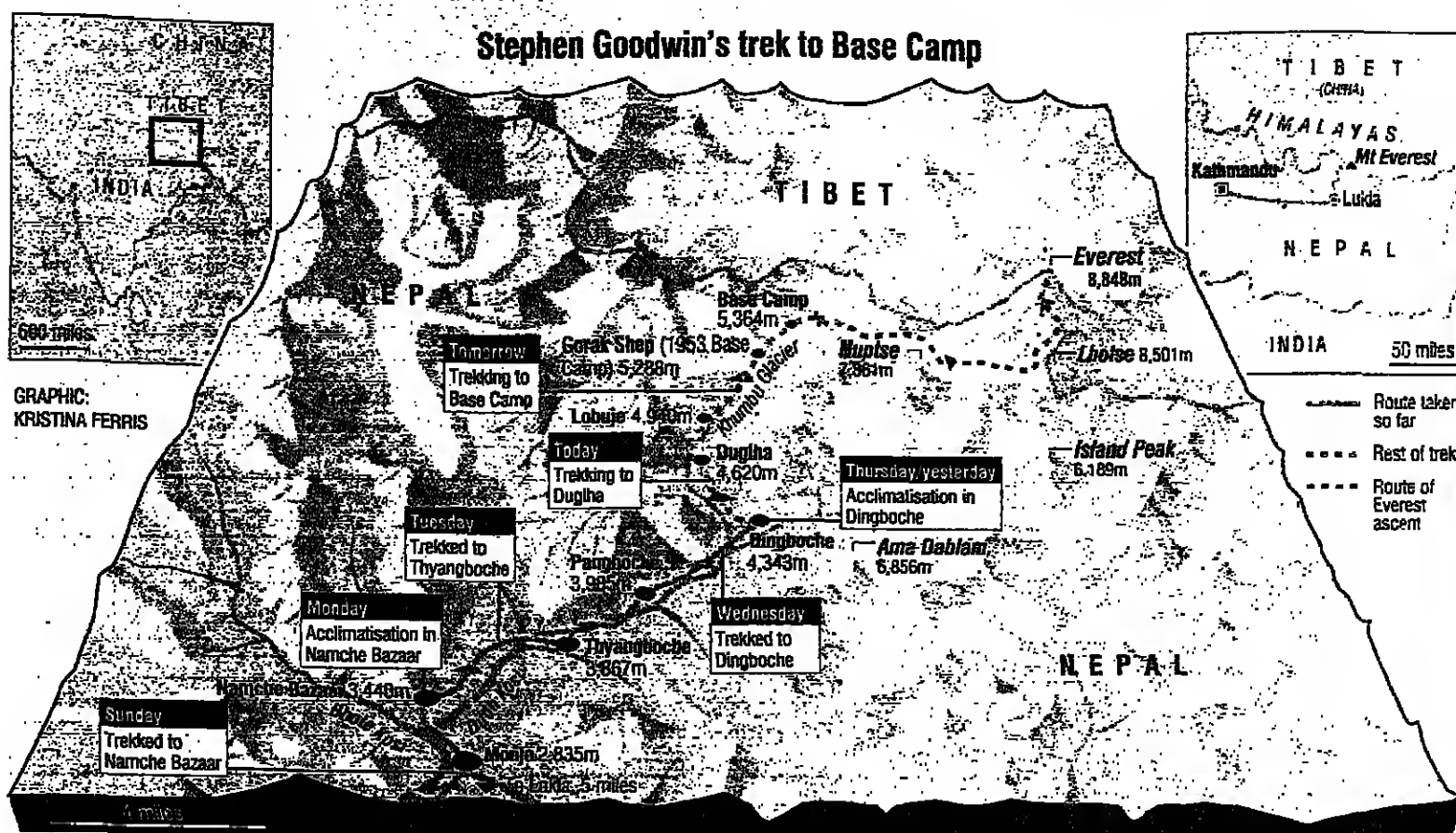
The building of the walls has taken place with the blessing of both communities, but Protestants have often been more in favour of them, hoping they will serve as barriers against what often view as a menacing Catholic advance. But although they have sometimes provided temporary relief from stonethrowing, they have not stemmed the steady flow of Protestant families from the area, and they have not reconciled the two communities to living in close proximity.

Ferry-port car bomb charge

A MAN was yesterday charged with possession of a 1,000lb car bomb, intercepted by an armed Garda unit at Dun Laoghaire ferry-port in Ireland on Thursday morning.

Larry Keane, 41, an unemployed man from Clonsilla near Ady, County Kildare, was charged at Dublin's Special Criminal Court with possession of the bomb which contained 980lb of home-made explosives.

What makes us risk all for a mountain?



Ultimate challenge: 'There is nothing more physically demanding and nerve-racking than Everest,' Goodwin's companions say
Photograph: Simon Lowe/Himalayan Kingdoms

WHAT MAKES someone so set on climbing Everest that they are prepared to spend £25,000 and risk their life for a goal that has already been achieved by more than 700 others?

Byron Smith and Rob Owen, two of my companions on the Himalayan Kingdoms Everest expedition, have no time for the cynics who say that paying to climb the mountain by the popular South Col route is "dog on a leash" stuff where guides and Sherpas do the hard work.

"It's still my legs and lungs that will get me up there," says Byron in his rich Canadian accent.

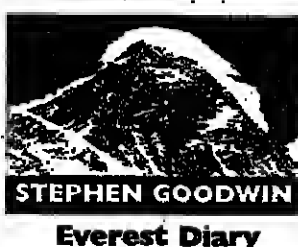
"It's just jealousy when people talk about it being a long yak route. They're just trying to belittle you to make themselves feel better."

Byron and Rob, like me, are on their first trip to the Himalayas. Unlike me, they had both made Everest a personal goal some time ago and are set on seeing it through.

For me, the expedition is a dream assignment, getting to the summit of the world would make me pretty chuffed, but it is the whole mountaineering experience that matters.

Byron would probably find this attitude somewhat negative. When I asked the pair if they have thought of climbing other lesser peaks in the Himalayas for starters, the answer was an emphatic no. "To me, Everest is the ultimate symbol of challenge," says Byron.

It is the same explanation I have heard from other members of the team, and one which



STEPHEN GOODWIN
Everest Diary

Dingboche

probably distinguishes the fee-paying clients on this type of expedition from the many groups of climbers who come out here each year to climb as friends on less prestigious but often more technically demanding peaks.

Rob Owen is a 32-year-old London stockbroker covering eastern Europe for ABN-Amro. The company will donate £15,000 to the Big Orange Bus charity, helping orphans in eastern Europe, but as a skilled operator, Rob has negotiated a rugby league-style win bonus. If he gets to the top and waves ABN-Amro's flag, the charity will get an extra 20 per cent.

Rob has already demonstrated the kind of gritty determination he will need later on in the way he refused to be laid low by a gut infection. All offers to take some of his rucksack load were declined and now he seems back to his stocky powerhouse self.

An adventurer rather than a mountaineer, Rob has been on three expeditions in the Arctic, hauling sledges for up to 14 hours a day, and two years ago he climbed Mount McKinley, at 6,198 metres, the highest peak

in North America. "The Arctic is an awesome experience but there is nothing more physically demanding and nerve-racking than Everest," he says.

If Rob sounds a driven man, just listen to Byron Smith, the 37-year-old owner of a Ford franchise in Vulcan, Alberta, and someone who "doesn't believe in the word can't".

A fitness fanatic, Byron hulks muscles in all directions, though he had to be advised that his brief running shorts might offend Sherpa sensitivities.

He has climbed 50 summits in the Rockies in the last six months and had originally thought of organising his own expedition to make him the 11th Canadian to the top.

He bought into the Himalayan Kingdoms Expedition purely for logistical reasons and admits he is not a natural team player.

When I wonder if that is not at odds with his success as an ice-hockey player, he sees no contradiction. "I was always the star. The team was built around me."

If hubris can get you to the top of Everest, Byron will be there. But in a piece of frank talking that could indicate friction when the tension mounts, he adds: "I won't let anyone get me off my game plan."

Both Byron and Rob are married. The Canadian says his wife Jamie understands how important Everest is to him but he is thankful his eight-year-old son Zachary doesn't appreciate the risk.

The stockbroker married

Lisa last July and is hoping our summit bid could come early so that he can make a speedy return home.

Rob's biggest fear is not the altitude or avalanches, but of not getting a chance at the summit - "the fear of spending 10 weeks on the mountain and then it's not our time,

and you have to accept that."

Whatever happens, he says it is going to be his last big shot. "Then I'm going to be a family man, throw away the crampons and pick up the diapers."

Perhaps that is one more distinction between the Everest challenger and the climbing lifer.

SOMETIMES
IT'S EASIER
TO TALK
TO SOMEONE
YOU
DON'T LIKE.



If you tell your girlfriend, will she think less of you?

Mother admits taking baby from hospital

A WOMAN yesterday admitted snatching a three-hour-old baby from a hospital maternity unit.

A judge at Basildon Crown Court was told that a psychiatric report on Denise Giddings, from Basildon in Essex, said she had been "extremely disturbed psychologically" when she took Karl Hawthorne from Basildon Hospital last December.

Judge Philip Clegg adjourned the case until 17 April, for probation reports to be prepared. After the hearing, Detective Superintendent David Bright said that Giddings's guilty plea had eased the pressure on both her own family and Karl's parents.

Giddings looked close to tears as she heard the judge grant her bail, but warned that it was no guarantee that he would not enforce a custodial sentence.

After the hearing, Det Supt Bright said: "The guilty plea made by Mrs Giddings today reflects on the first-class investigation in which police received excellent support from the public and not least of all the media. We would not have been able to catch Mrs Giddings so quickly without the assistance of the media."

And the speed with which Mrs Giddings was arrested brought about the safe return of Karl - because my fear, my very real fear, was for the safety of that young child.

But with all those facts aside, today takes some of the pressure off Karl's parents and



Safe and well: Karl back in the arms of her mother Tanya

family members and also the Giddingses, to enable all parties to get their lives back together."

Karl was snatched from her hospital bed on 5 December. Her parents Tanya and Karl had to endure a 14-hour wait as police mounted a nation-wide search for the 6lb 15oz infant.

Their nightmare ended when one of Giddings's neighbours called police to say she suspected the mother-of-three.

On 6 December, police raided her Basildon home and found Karl safe and well sleeping in an upstairs room.

Yesterday Barry Spanjar, one of Giddings's defence team, said she still denied knowing the reasons for the abduction. Claims that she carried out the abduction in an attempt for a reconciliation with her estranged husband, Leslie, were false.

Mr Spanjar also denied that Giddings, whose children were all boys, had grabbed Karl because she was desperate for a baby girl.

"It could just as easily have been a boy... She took the nearest baby. That baby could have been anyone's," he said.

When you have a problem, it's the most natural thing in the world to want to talk it through with someone.

Sometimes, though, this creates another problem: who's the best person to confide in?

An obvious choice would be a close friend. But let's face it, we don't always choose our friends for their amazing powers of tact, diplomacy and discretion. Tell one person, and you may end up telling the world.

You may be lucky enough to be able to talk to someone in your family. Then again, you may be one of the large number of people who find talking to your nearest and dearest agonisingly embarrassing.

A girlfriend or boyfriend? If you can, great. But sometimes we don't want to expose our weaknesses to those who fancy us.

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We'll go through it with you.

Rise and fall of the maestro of the macabre

IT WAS a chance remark by an eager PR woman that led me to meet Anthony Noel Kelly and discover his macabre art. Jibby Bean came into the office of the *Independent on Sunday* to talk to us about the London contemporary Arts Fair, and let drop, casually, that one of the exhibitors was sculpting parts of the human body using limbs and sections of corpses. After she left, the editor, Rosie Boycott, other staff and I looked at one another with some incredulity. We rang up Kelly, asked to visit, and off I went.

Few people I have met as a journalist have made such an impact on me as Kelly did that day. He was in a studio in Clapham, surrounded by tanks, dripping taps, developed photographs of naked people hanging up to dry, and silver figures of humans, lovingly cast from moulds made from actual remains. There were heads of old men, the side of another, looking more like a ham in a butcher's display than part of person: hands cut at the wrist.

It was January 1997. Outside, it was hovering at freezing point; inside, the studio was icy. Kelly, with his unkempt hair, cadaverous, high-cheekboned face, and intense gaze, fascinated me. It is rare to meet anyone so committed, so strong in their self-belief. He asserted his absolute right to do what he did - take pieces of corpses and use them for his own artistic purposes. It took an effort to remember he had no right to take these parts. What might relatives of the dead feel about his covert theft, his taking of human remains from a medical college which had pledged to respect them? He seemed genuinely concerned about their feelings.

"I have no qualms about doing this work. I would not wish to hurt anyone," he said. What was apparent, though, was that

Catherine Pepinster recalls the rise to infamy of Anthony Kelly, an artist with a cadaverous touch

he had the arrogance that comes with conviction. These people did not matter as much as his own artistic endeavour.

But there was something reckless about Kelly too. The fact that he had agreed to exhibit at the fair, to let the PR mention it to us, and allow me, with a photographer, come into studio for two and a half hours, and witness his trade in the dead. The way he spoke of what he did betrayed his delight in dicing with danger too: "To get them was a sweat, under cover of darkness," he said. "I had the police on me once because someone had tipped them off. I still had some body pieces I hadn't yet used and I had to destroy them."

Then, as we moved upstairs to his living-room to chat over coffee, surrounded by golden horses' legs, hanging from hooks as meat in an abattoir where Kelly learned his craft of hutchery, he dropped a little gem. He explained that as well as his own art, he was a tutor at the Prince of Wales's Institute of Architecture.

It was that fact, and the grisly details of his corpses, which drew all the other papers, especially the tabloids, to follow up my story the following week. But on the Sunday morning, what did for Kelly was a particular reader of the *Independent on Sunday* - Dr Laurence Martin, Her Majesty's Inspector of Anatomy, who alerted the police. The result was yesterday's criminal conviction. Since my

first visit to Kelly's studio, people have asked me: "Didn't it give you the creeps, visiting that man?" No, it didn't.

I didn't believe for one moment that I would be sliced into bits. Yes, there was a man obsessed with death, but at least he faced it.

"You look at them and remind yourself, this is how we all end up," was how he put it. Today, our sanitised world tries not to think about the end of life, and the experience of dying. He did. After he was arrested, I went to see him again. There were journalists outside his studio. I rang the bell: he said his solicitor had told him not to speak to anyone. When I explained that I had brought him some lilies, he came to the door, said "Hello darling," and invited me in. There seemed to be no hard feelings: I got my follow-up story. When I left, the pack of reporters pursued me down the street. I got a glimpse, then, of what I had unleashed.



Body of work: Kelly in his studio with part of his controversial oeuvre, cast from actual human remains filched from a medical college



Casts in Kelly's studio of body remnants

Wren's lover says no-touch rule unbroken

THE LOVER of the senior Wren at the centre of a military sex scandal yesterday denied breaking the "no-touching rule" while they both served on the aircraft carrier HMS *Illustrious*. Lieutenant Nigel McTea admitted having sex with Lieutenant Commander Karen Pearce in a hired car during shore leave in Malta in February 1996. But he denied taking her back to her cabin after a party with up to 70 people on board the ship.

During the court martial of Lt Cdr Pearce's former lover and boss, Lieutenant Colonel Keith Pople, Lt McTea confirmed that the men's showers were close to his lover's cabin and it would have been possible for men to visit her early in the morning or late at night.

And during cross examination by Rhydian Willis, for the defence, he said that her cabin could have been set out with cushions and bedding on the floor so two people could have sex. But he added: "There is a no-touching rule on ship."

Lt Col Pople is accused of having a three-year affair with Lt Cdr Pearce while he was her superior at a key Ministry of De-

fence team in Whitehall. Lt Col Pople, 42, is also accused of bombarding her with threatening phone calls and letters after their break-up in June, 1996.

He denies two charges of scandalous conduct and conduct to the prejudice of good order and military discipline.

If found guilty at the court martial in Aldershot, Hampshire, he would be dismissed from the Army after a 20-year career.

The hearing was told yesterday that Lt McTea moved in with the Wren in October 1996 after her affair with Lt Col Pople had broken up.

But he moved back with his second wife over Christmas and only decided to move back again with Lt Cdr Pearce, 34, after he left Britain on *Illustrious* in the January. He continued to contact Lt Cdr Pearce and kept the relationship secret from his wife.

When *Illustrious* returned to Portsmouth he moved in with his lover and told his wife over the phone about the end of their marriage. Ms Willis said: "She had been in the dark about what you were doing?" Lt McTea said: "Yes."

The hearing continues.

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Risky visit: Could high insurance premiums stop Tony and Cherie Blair calling on constituents? Photograph: Richard Rayner/North News and Pictures

Famous friends push up price of insurance

By Kate Watson-Smyth

TONY BLAIR would like you to think he's the kind of guy who would drop in for a cup of tea, but you would be well advised to turn him away if one day he appears on your doorstep.

An insurance company has refused to insure people who have any contact with the famous because, they claim, the risks are too great.

Direct Line, one of the biggest and fastest growing companies in the country, refused insurance to Peter Kellner, the political analyst, because, they said, it was possible that Tony Blair might visit his house and have an accident.

Adrian Webb, the company's spokesman, said they asked everyone their occupation and the question of whether Mr Kellner knew anyone famous followed on from that.

"Suppose Tony Blair did come to your house, tripped over a piece of loose stair carpeting and ended up in hospital. We would be liable. The risk is too great," he said.

"Everyone's policy is calculated on the basis of risk, and certain occupations have a higher risk if the person is exposed to situations where they may expect to have a public figure in their home."

He added: "We do not cover theatrical agents, although that would apply more to car insurance," he said. "We would want to know if they gave lifts to famous people as there is always the risk of an accident."

Alan Saunders, spokesman for Creation Records, said people working in the music industry also tended to have very high insurance premiums.

"As soon as you tell them your occupation the price rockets," he said. "You might be transporting famous people in your car and their lives are worth a lot of money so the insurance costs a lot more."

"Insurance companies also tend to assume that you're a drug-crazed alcoholic if you work in the music industry, which tends to push the cost up as well."

But Guardian Direct said

they had no problems with insuring celebrities and never asked if the client knew anyone famous.

"We would never turn someone down just because they knew someone famous who might visit," said Ben Connor. "You would be covered whether it was Roy Blair who fell down the stairs or the postman."

"We have a lot of famous people on our books and they probably entertain other famous people at home but we just don't ask. We also provide motor insurance for several sportsmen whose legs are very valuable for instance."

Mike Williams, chief executive of the British Insurance and Investment Brokers Association, said he had never heard the same question before.

"More companies are asking 'lifestyle' questions about how many televisions people own and whether they smoke, but asking about their friends is quite unique."

"What they are saying is that it will cost more to reimburse someone who is injured in your house if it is someone famous or wealthy. But are you going to ask all your friends how much money they have before you let them cross the doorstep?"

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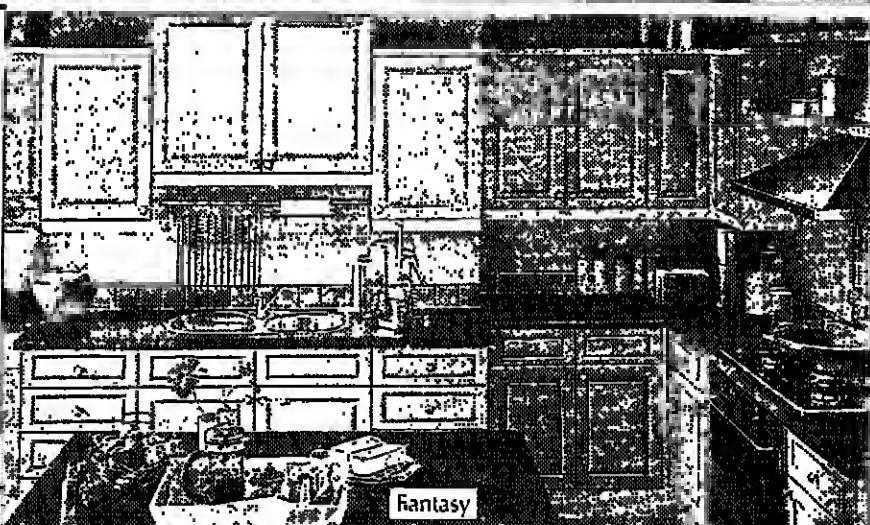
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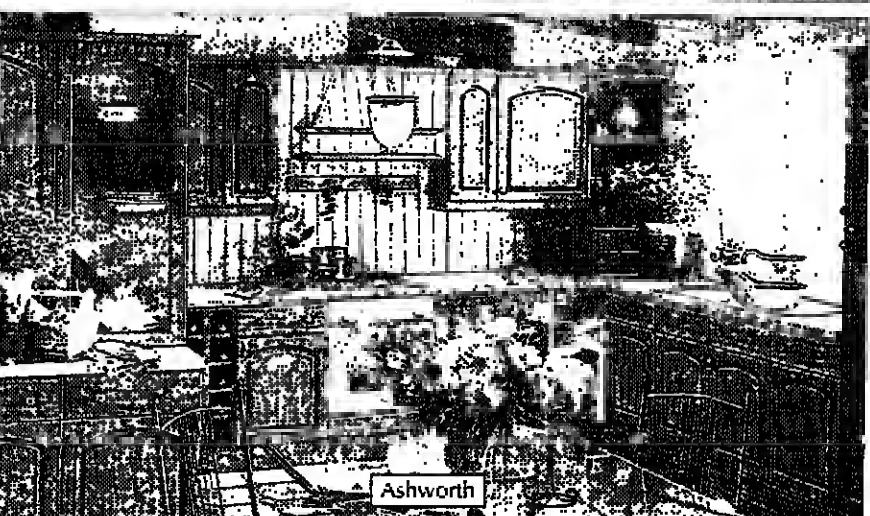
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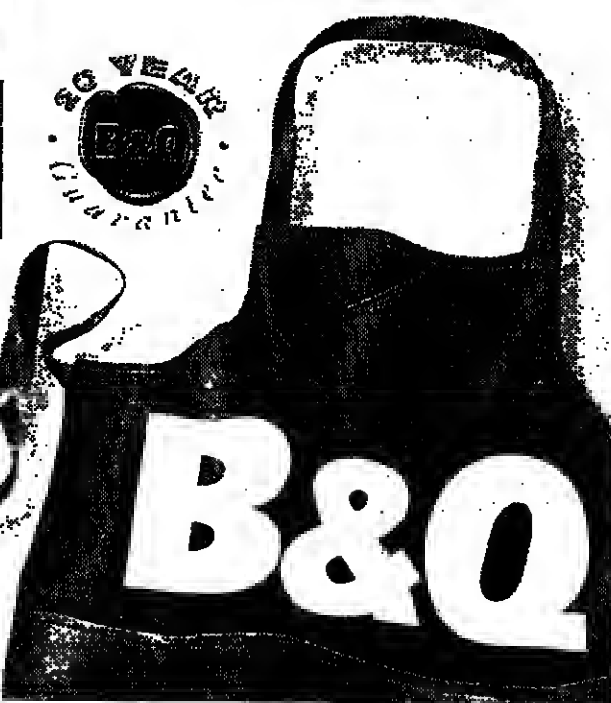
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BA's rivals match cut-price flights

THE low-price airline war intensified yesterday with rivals to British Airways' newly launched discount flight company, Go, cutting their fares.

Earlier this week, Go announced that it will be offering £100 return fares when its Stansted to Rome, Milan and Copenhagen services start later in the spring.

Yesterday, KLM said that it was bringing its Stansted to Milan return air fare down from £104 to £100 to match Go's offer.

KLM is also reducing its one-way Stansted-Milan fare from £79 to £50. In addition, another "no-frills" carrier, Debonair, said that it was introducing £99 return fares on its Luton to Rome service until 9 June.

After that, and until October, the lowest Debonair return fare on the route will be £109 - a £10 reduction on the pre-April price. The airline also intends to introduce a second daily service to Rome from the end of this month to match the Go frequency.

Go's Rome services start on 22 May, with Milan flights beginning on 23 May and Copenhagen starting on 5 June. There are two weekday flights a day to each destination, using 148-seater Boeing 737s.

Meanwhile, Air France has increased its Heathrow to Paris weekday frequency from 11 to 14 flights and has added an extra, fourth, daily flight on the Manchester to Paris service.

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The benefits of buying to let

Demand is growing for good rental property and there is money to be made, writes
Ginetta Vedrickas

At the risk of being banned from Butlins, can you spot a connection between Margaret Thatcher and the mother-in-law?

Malcolm Harrison, spokesperson for the Association of Residential Lettings Agents (ARLA) thinks he can. He links the Iron Lady and the gradual demise of old-style comedians' favourite person to his industry's current success.

"Margaret Thatcher pushed many into buying who otherwise may not have," Mr Harrison says. "Couples tend not to marry these days, there's not that pressure from the mother-in-law, so they rent rather than buy."

Is renting preferable to buying? And why are investors buying to let? The London lettings scene is complex and it's hard to have an overview of a market encapsulating corporate and private tenants.

Private rentals in the UK run at around 11 per cent compared to France or Germany's 40 per cent. Rates are rising and pre-Budget jitters now seem like unnecessary angst.

One agent confided: "We've been praying and waiting to see if that nice Mr Brown was going to hammer us. We're breathing sighs of relief as he's been pretty neutral about lettings and there are minor advantages in the small print." Buying British is obviously endemic but are things changing?

Many agents believe that buyers now delay until their mid-30s because of an increasing need for mobility. "Couples are too busy working these days, frequently on short contracts, so they rent for flexibility. They don't want the hassle of coming home and finding the drains blocked, they leave that to the landlord," says Malcolm Harrison, who sites divorce and separation rates as additional influences.

Susan Fitz-Gibbon, owner of Fitz-Gibbon Residential, has clients in all sectors of the market. Covering west London from Kensington to Hampton, Susan credits the big boys for an expanding market. "The corporates are coming out of the woodwork and they will pay up to £1,200 per week for good-



Houses galore: but it's still easier to find somewhere to buy than a quality place to rent

Photograph: David Rose

sized family homes. They're bringing in new people and previously slashed allowances are going up."

Susan has six clients chasing each property and many are let the same day. Investors are keen to buy in an area that is cheaper than prime London heartland and yields a greater return, so the suburbs are popular. "We aim for at least 10 per cent," says Susan. "But there's a huge need for more people to let."

Landlords who bought at peak prices sold once the market revived, leaving a paucity of middle market rental property.

ARLA and seven members in the Council for Mortgage Lenders launched the "Buy to Let" scheme 18 months ago to boost rentals. With investors able to borrow at 6.99 per cent fixed for three years, the scheme has helped to bring good quality properties onto the market. Andrew Reeves, a Bromley lettings agent, says: "You won't find granny's cast-off squinty carpets in these flats. They are aimed at thirties professionals in sound employment who are happy to rent providing standards are good."

But is the new investor a Rachman wannabe? "We've finally killed him off. Your average landlord is in his forties or fifties," says Malcolm Harrison. "He's got his PEPs and his Tassos, Aunt Agatha dies

and he's got a bit of surplus. He wants an investment he can walk past, he doesn't want to put it in Nick Leeson's pocket and have it floating off to Tokyo."

Jo Kinson, 31, doesn't quite fit the stereotype. She does have the maximum amount of Tassos and PEPs and chose the buy to let scheme to give her portfolio a "broader base of investment". Jo found that she would get the best return on a one-bedroom flat in west London, a popular area for rentals. Was the process complex? "I can't believe how easy it's been. I got a buy-to-let mortgage over the phone, handed over to the lettings agent and within two weeks a South African professional moved in straight from his hotel."

Jo's return is around 12 per cent and she is looking for a second property for herself and another for a friend overseas. Has she any tips? "Find a flat that needs minimal upkeep and decorate it in neutral colours. Mine looks incredibly fresh and if there's a choice of properties you know that yours will rent first."

Angela Folan, another investor through the scheme, agrees. Her two Bromley flats with monthly rentals of £475 and £550 currently bring returns of 10 and 12 per cent. Angela is happy for agents to manage her flats and hopes to take over when her children are bigger

so that "it will be like a job". Any problems so far? "My only regret is not doing it sooner. Years ago my bank manager pooch-pooched the idea of a housewife doing such a thing, but this time it was so easy."

Brendan Binnerman, a psychiatrist, will be working in Camberwell, London for two years and is renting a one-bed flat nearby for £500 a month. Was it easy to find somewhere? "It was much harder than I thought. Agents were hopeless and didn't marry up the right sorts of properties with tenants. I was turned down because I smoke and was shocked to find some flats turned out to be council properties and were very dodgy."

Are couples impulsive about the sort of property they rent? Nadine Morgan, the Institute of Psychiatry's accommodation officer, helps visitors find short-let rentals and frequently sees aspirations shift downwards. "Visitors come for six months and hope that relatives will visit. Initially they want a two-bed but when they discover the cost they swiftly change to a one-bed and say relatives can sleep on the sofa."

Buy to Let hotline: 01923 896555, Monday-Friday 9am-5.30pm; Fitz-Gibbon Residential, 0181 892 8921; Andrew Reeves, 0181 464 8566.

Investing in property? Look for a spot in demand

Although rental incomes have not risen in line with sales values, there is still money to be made, writes Mary Wilson

Investing in property is a capital idea, providing you buy wisely in a good location. Although rental yields – the annual rental as a percentage of a home's value – have not risen in line with sales values over the past 18 months, they still represent a good return compared with money in the bank.

In general, yields are currently around 7 or 8 per cent gross, but there are pockets all around the country where higher returns are achievable. And although yields might be down compared with two years ago, the value of your property will have risen significantly.

The secret is to buy a property for which there is a huge demand. This might be one- or two-bedroom flats in London, a five-bedroom house in Surrey or a three-bedroom terraced house in the North-west. Good prospects should be had in a city where there is a continual turnover of employees, all looking to rent while they are on short-term contracts; somewhere with a university or college or an up and coming area, where purchase prices are low enough to produce a high percentage return.

In London, the traditional investment areas – Knightsbridge, Kensington, Chelsea, Mayfair – will produce a steady, but at the most an 8 per cent, return on your money. "It is difficult now to get double figures in London, but there are little pockets such as the Docklands and the City where it is still possible," says Jonathan Vandermolen of Blenheim Bishop. "Small apartments with one or two bedrooms will produce the best results, especially good one-bedders."

He is selling a new development in Warren Street, W1, which should produce a higher than usual rental return. "It is not in a prime residential area, so capital outlay is lower, but it is close enough to Oxford Circus to achieve 10 per cent," he says.

There is also a shortage of genuine loft space (former industrial properties with large open spaces) in London available for rent. "Gross investment yields on this type of property in City fringe areas such as Clerkenwell and Shoreditch are often in excess of 12 per cent," says Clive Martin, residential lettings manager with Stirling Ackroyd.

City suburbs that are well located should produce satisfactory returns and sometimes a good quality, newly built development in an area that is easily accessible to London and the airport will see higher than usual rental returns. But remember when agents quote possible yields to take account not only of all charges and expenses, but also possible void periods, which make a considerable dent in your income.

At Wentworth Gate, a Barrat development of apartments, town houses and large detached houses in Ascot, Surrey, some properties are set to achieve up to 12 per cent returns. "Homes in certain parts of Surrey which are near to the American schools are achieving very good premiums because of the high demand and lack of supply," says Lynne Mayell of Knight Frank, which is letting some of the properties.

"People who have bought early in the development will do best. Although returns might be a bit lower to start with because of the building, once that has finished the rents will go up," she says.

The good news for all those people who do not live south of Walsford is that areas in the north are hot spots, too. According to a recent survey conducted by Mortgage Express, the North-west is currently the best place in the buy-to-let property market.

"These areas are popular because of the rental incomes that can be achieved," says Tim Dawson, deputy managing director. "The North-west leads the field because it has the added attraction that the investment required to buy properties is lower than many other regions across the UK."

The survey shows that the most popular property to buy for investment in general across the UK is a two- or three-bedroom terraced house. Two- or three-bedroom post-1960 terraced houses come second, followed closely by flats and maisonettes.

"There is a lot of investment around Manchester," says Paul Heath of broker Langmore James Association. "Three- to five-bedroom terraced properties are all showing net returns of around 10 per cent. In Warrington, it is the two-up-two-downs which are showing the highest. Hamptons has been monitoring rental properties around the county and the top spots are the Colswolds, where a two-bedroom cottage in 1997 produced a gross yield of 6.75 per cent (with a 10 per cent increase in capital value). Beaconsfield where four-bedroom houses achieved over 10 per cent and Amersham, where a two-bedroom house achieved an 8 per cent yield."

"These good returns are largely led by the number of applicants in the area," says Annabel Barnes, director of country lettings. "Certain parts of Surrey and Berkshire are particularly popular with relocating employees, mostly Americans, who all want the right house on the right bus route near the right school. There isn't enough to go round, so they will pay big premiums."

Safe as houses – if you've a good builder

A trusty handyman can be the first line of defence against looming problems, writes
Robert Liebman

Through wonky windows, builders reveal their mettle.

After 20 years of neglect, a four-bedroom semi-detached house in south-west London was being thoroughly overhauled for new owners. Workers were fixing floors and renewing walls when builder Terry Gauntlett, replacing a rotten first-floor window, saw that a fungus was among them.

Dry rot is a mushroom-like infestation which, if left untreated, could develop into a serious, and seriously expensive, problem. Mr Gauntlett informed the owner, who immediately hired specialists. The infestation was localised, and the extra expense and mess were barely noticeable.

In Ealing, meanwhile, the surveyor for first-time buyers Loretta and Neill said that their windows needed replacing. Their handyman, Peter Daines, suggested a second opinion, namely, his own. "He examined the windows in the neighbouring houses, saw that they were original and told us ours could be fixed too," says Loretta.

"He saved us hundreds of pounds, and now we are doing or work in the house which 'eviously couldn't afford," says Gauntlett and Daines among the legions of gen-builders and handymen on legions of homeowners. They belong to no trade associations, but neither are cowboys. Mr Gauntlett is aing about certain trade qualifications consist in thing more than paying a fee.

Cowboys conceal their dodgy pasts and knock on strangers' doors. Legitimate builders thrive on recommendations and are often too busy to serve new clients.

"We found Mr Daines through a friend of my mother," says Loretta, who notes that he was recommended for being helpful as well as skilful. When the couple restored their fireplaces, Mr Daines brought them tiles from the large collection of timber, doors and other discards that he has squirreled away over the years. "The tiles were old and old-fashioned, which was perfect for our living room. We never would have found such attractive and inexpensive tiles on our own."

She credits him, too, for his solution for their bowed interior wall. Instead of rebuilding the wall, "he installed a picture rail to attract the eye. It's a visual distraction which hides the bowing."

Cosmetic work is not always innocent or advisable. Mr Daines says that he often has to undo earlier work done on the cheap, "especially work done in the wrong sequence. Many people can't afford full refurbishment, so they do the cosmetic work first, then when the building work is done, it ruins the cosmetic work."

Some builders excel as skive artists: "One homeowner hired me to fix a leak but I could not find the hot and cold valves. Finally I found them under some tiles. Obviously, a handyman had loosened the holding nuts on the valves and crisscrossed them over one another to lie flatter and closer to the wall. He wasn't doing plumbing. He was tiling, and when he found obstacles, he simply tiled over them."

Most British properties are old and, Mr Daines stresses, have had a succession of builders as well as owners. Some of these handymen have covered rather than corrected, resulting in what he refers to as "laminated concealment".

Fortunately, symptoms usually appear before total failure, enabling owners to budget for their repair or replacement. Mr Daines favours a shake test: "Things should fit solidly. I

shake things – radiators, countertops, banisters, windows, all sorts of things. If something is loose, there's probably a problem." Simple visual inspection is also informative. "If something is old, its time may have come. A radiator that is 20 years old is going to need replacing soon. Twenty-year-old radiators also look their age."

However, sometimes even the best jack-of-all-trades handyman doesn't suffice, whether for reasons of true specialist quality, safety or legality. Electric shock, fire or carbon monoxide poisoning are too steep a price to pay.

By law, cooker installation and other gas fittings must be done by a fitter registered with Corgi, the Council for Registered Gas Installers. Some electrical work is also legally required, and even simple wiring jobs require professional expertise. A major fire can start from a poorly wired hall light as easily as from a faulty fuse box. With electrical work, warns Mr Gauntlett, "all you see is a plug, you don't see the wires behind." This normally sceptical builder strongly recommends using a member of the NICEIC, the electricians' association.

For their part, owners must exercise vigilance and self-servicence.

* References, references, references – good, honest reliable workers leave a trail of recommendations. Ask for references; don't hesitate to interview several builders and get quotes from each.

* Advance payments? The Federation of Master Builders asserts that "advance payments, particularly at the start of a job, should be avoided." Mr Gauntlett asserts, "don't pay until the work is done. People volunteer to pay me all or part in advance, thousands of pounds. Many people want to part with their money. I say, 'No, pay me at the end or as the work is done.'"

* Pay as you go, pay as it has been earned.

* Most trade associations have genuine membership qualifi-



Warming tales: Loretta and Neill were saved a lot of money by their builder, who also found their old tiles for their fireplaces

Photograph: Philip Meach

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How attention was channelled on TV newsreaders' open secret



Patrick Poivre d'Arvor: Like father, like son

Hidden children are turning out of cupboards all over France. Mazarine, the late President Mitterrand's long-secret daughter, published her first novel yesterday, and the week also saw the media debut of the tiny son of two television newsreaders, who are not married to each other.

The fact they had a child together is widely known but never mentioned in the French press, fearful of the country's often-flouted privacy law. This week, *Paris Match* published charming pictures of the little boy, aged two, with the permission of his mother, the unmarried Claire Chazal, 41, who reads the TF1 news on Saturday and Sunday.

There was no mention in the article that his father is the married, litigious Patrick Poivre d'Arvor, 50, who reads the news on TF1 from Monday to Friday. Substantial hypocrisy is involved here: the TF1 news often infringes the spirit, if not

PARIS DIARY



John Lichfield

the letter, of French privacy law. The station gave regular, intrusive bulletins on the fateful friendship between Diana, Princess of Wales, and Dodi Fayed last summer. The unstated joke for *Paris Match* readers was that François Chazal is the spitting image of his presumed father, one of the most familiar faces in France.

A painting by Vincent Van Gogh, not exhibited since 1906, is to be loaned by a Russian museum to

a small café-restaurant in the outer suburbs of Paris. But the Auberge Ravoux at Auvers-sur-Oise is no ordinary café. It is the place where Vincent Van Gogh died in July 1890.

Its owner, Dominique-Charles Janssens - a Van Gogh lover and self-described "crazy Belgian" - bought the building seven years ago. He has restored it without public funds to the condition in which Van Gogh knew it, down to the zinc bar and 19th-century menu.

The Pushkin Museum's decision to loan him the canvas - *Paysage d'Auvers après la pluie* - "brings off a great gamble", Mr Janssens says.

The painting, estimated to be worth £35m, is one of 70 dashed off by Van Gogh while he lived at the inn in the two months before he died.

Extraordinary security precautions will have to be taken. The picture will be housed in what amounts to a safe made of armoured glass, installed in

Van Gogh's old attic bedroom. Shortly before his death, in this room, Vincent Van Gogh told his brother and benefactor Theo (both the brothers are buried in Auvers-sur-Oise) that his dearest wish was to have his paintings exhibited in a café. Mr Janssens says the arrival of the canvas from Moscow - no date is yet fixed - will "realise that dream".

"This is not going to be a museum but a living memorial," says Mr Janssens, "a convivial place, which will perpetuate the tradition of the artists' café."

What has barely survived, however, is the Ile-de-France landscape painted by Van Gogh. At the time he lived and died there, Auvers-sur-Oise was in deep countryside. It is now a pretty oasis in the tangle of motorways, car showrooms, shopping malls, bungalows and tower blocks which cocoon the city of Paris to a depth of 20 miles or more.



Claire Chazal: Mother's pride Photograph: Rex Features

Jewish fury over sale of Nazi camp uniforms

By Imre Karacs
in Bonn

Central Council of Jews in Germany

LEGAL experts in Berlin were combing through the statute books yesterday in an attempt to find a pretext for banning what promises to be the most disgusting sale of the century.

On Thursday, the city's public prosecutor gave the go-ahead for an auction of the striped uniforms worn by concentration camp inmates before they were led into the gas chambers. The proposed sale, organised by a Berlin collector who has sympathies with the extreme right, was immediately condemned by the Jewish community as "tasteless".

Jens Lau, the collector who runs a shop selling Nazi memorabilia, wants to hold auctions in Hamburg, Munich, and Berlin. The uniforms, with a reserve price of about DM300 (£100), are currently stored in the basement of his shop.

The origin of the clothing is not clear but Mr Lau has business connections with 10 museums, including Washington's Holocaust Museum. Some reports suggest that Mr Lau had obtained the controversial items from private collectors, including some in the United States.

Jewish leaders called on the authorities to stop the sale, but so far in vain. "In what kind of an age are we living, that such a perverse, inhuman auction can take place?" asked Michel Friedman, a member of the

Central Council of Jews in Germany. Nevertheless, on Thursday the authorities dismissed the complaints as legally unfounded. A spokeswoman for Berlin's justice ministry said all possible criminal charges that could have been brought against the auction house had been explored, including desecration of the memory of the dead, and the use of outlawed symbols.

The prosecutors have examined every possible charge, but were unable to find a offence they could prosecute, she added. "Whether the auction is moral or not is an entirely different question."

Yesterday, the public prosecutor's office rowed back, announcing a second inquiry. The matter must be investigated again, said Bernd Wolke, the city's chief public prosecutor. But he reiterated that no regulation appears to have been infringed.

Under German law, the sale or display of Nazi symbols is banned, unless the owners can prove that their actions fall within the domain of academic inquiry. There is no law specifically forbidding trade in items that had belonged to Nazi victims.

The only escape route from this legal quagmire might be the civil courts. But for that, relatives of concentration camp inmates would have to bring a law suit. The German state itself is powerless.

Germany united on paper at last

THE WALL fell, the currencies merged, roads and railway lines were welded together, but in literature a minefield has still kept the two German nations apart, writes Imre Karacs. Now, eight years after reunification, writers from the two sides of the Iron Curtain are about to embrace one another.

In a historic meeting in Berlin, members of the writers' association, Pen (East), yesterday voted to merge their organisation with its western alter ego to form a united writers' association. Provided western German writers agree at their general assembly next month, an all-German association should be set up at an inaugural meeting in Goethe's Weimar at the end of the year.

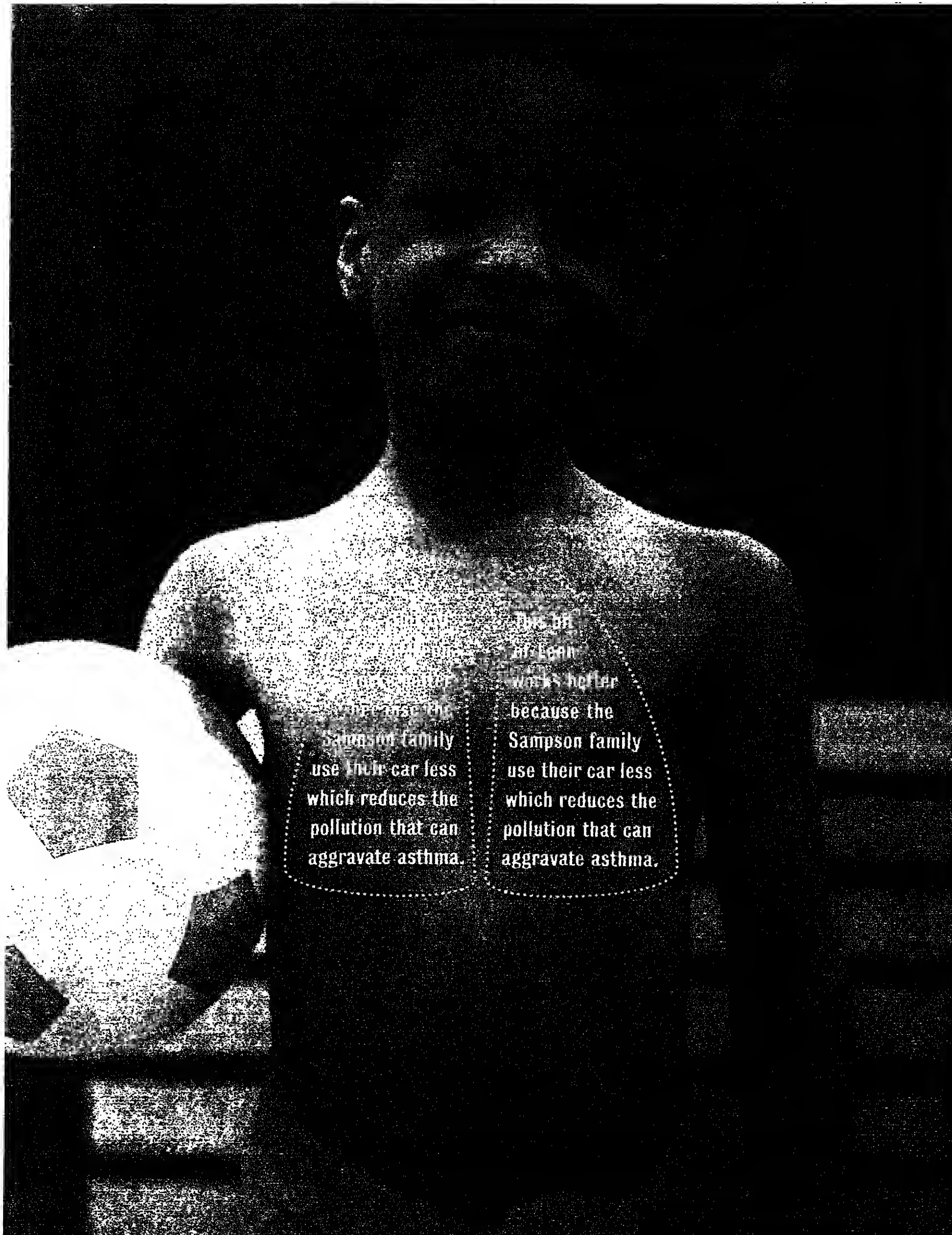
The wounds might take longer to heal. After 1989, members of the East German body split along the lines of opponents and advocates of the Communist regime. Literature on the dark side of the Wall had largely been a preserve of sycophants, irre-

spective of talent. Free thinkers had been stifled and denounced, often by their colleagues.

Western writers demanded a purge after unification, but most established Ossi authors resisted it, because they had too much to lose. Over the years, the Communist propagandists crumbled away, but two members of Pen (East) suspected of links to the Stasi secret police refused to budge.

Faced with the prospect of merger with an organisation crawling with Communist spies, Pen (West) also ruptured. Walk-out followed walk-out, particularly when Günter Grass, the greatest German writer alive, took the side of Stasi enforcers.

Now that the Ossis have dumped the last of their spooky unification beckons. It will be very much on the same basis as the country's political union: the headquarters of Pen (West) in Darmstadt will take over all functions, though the Ossis will be allowed to keep a regional office in Berlin.



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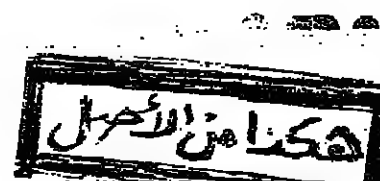
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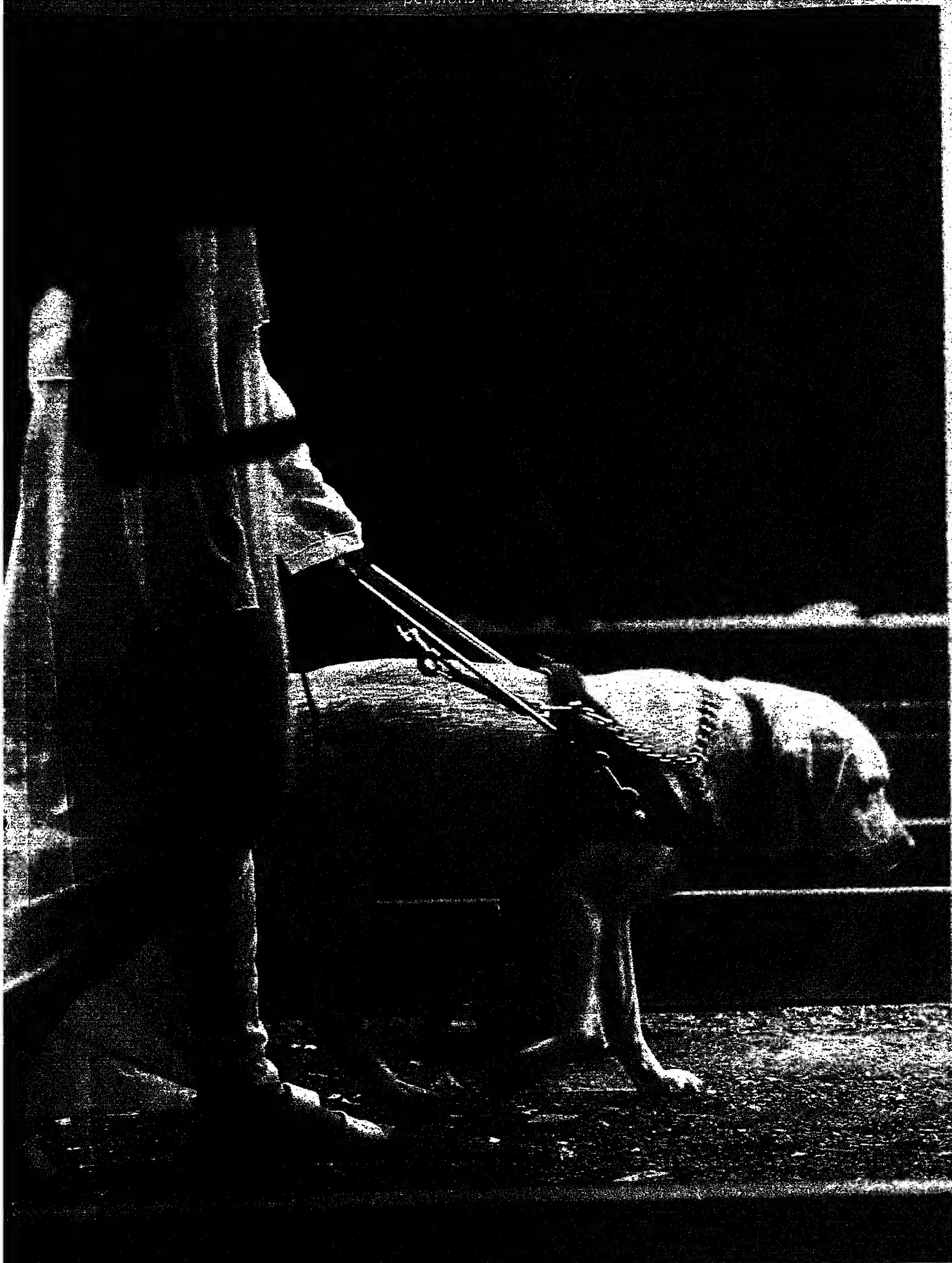


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Monks keep the Kosovo flame burning

By Steve Crawshaw

"LORD have mercy", sings the choir, basso profundo. *Gospodi pomilui ... Gospodi pomilui ... Gospodi pomilui*. The voices echo through the medieval monastery of Decani, in the still-Serb province of Kosovo. The heeded monks celebrate mass in this most beautiful of Serbian churches as though everything were normal. But these are not normal times. Even the most devout believer must suffer twinges of doubt about the quality of mercy, as the region rumbles towards full-scale war.

The monastery, with its rich interior, covered from floor to roof in stunning 14th-century frescoes, is at the heart of the belief in the Serbness of Kosovo. Barely 10 per cent of the population of Kosovo is Serb. Few have ever visited this poverty-stricken region. But they will still tell you this is their "heartland". Demographically, politically and geographically, the phrase is wrong. Historically, it is correct. In the Balkans, that is all that counts.

The humiliating defeat by the Turks at the battle of Kosovo Field in 1389 marked a date to remember for every Serb - "the Armageddon of the Serbian people", in one writer's phrase. After Kosovo Field, only the monasteries remained, scattered across the region in commemoration of Serb rule. Each is full of historical resonance - like the monastery at Gracanica, whose monks gave communion to Tsar Lazar and his army before the battle of Kosovo Field.

The Serbs have long been outnumbered. The traveller Edith Durham wrote at the beginning of this century, "The [Serb] cause was lost, dead and gone - as lost as is Calais to England, and the English claim to Normandy." But the monasteries have remained, as the high-water mark of an ancient Serb identity.

In 1989, on the 600th anniversary of Kosovo Field, the Serb Communist leader Slobodan Milosevic proclaimed that Serbs must be the masters once more. The majority Albanians were to be crushed. Serbs adored their powerful new leader - failing to realise the new culture of repression might blow up in their face.

In Kosovo, the repression is stronger than ever before. A few miles from the tranquillity of Decani, Serb police recently have been killing Albanians and destroying their homes. There are armed checkpoints in the town. As you travel through the villages, you meet Albanians packing up their belongings and abandoning their homes - on carts, on tractors, on foot. There is a mood of fear and an expectation of full-scale war.

In the short term, well-equipped Serb forces hold all the cards. But the Albanian majority cannot be repressed by military force for ever. Already, an armed backlash has begun, which seems certain to get worse. The monks of Decani feel nervous.

Fr Sava, a senior monk at Decani, is unusual in criticising the policies of Slobodan Milosevic for propelling Kosovo towards war. "Serbia should be democratised. An undemocratic



Safe haven? A monk at prayer in Decani. So far, the monastery has not suffered any violence, but the monks are an obvious target

Photograph: David Rose

regime has done nothing to make the situation better - but has used this situation for its own power." So far, Decani has not itself suffered violence. But Fr Sava and his fellow monks are an obvious, if innocent target. Attacks have been reported at

the convent at Devic, in the heart of the Drenica area, where the Albanian rebellion is strongest. Fr Sava knows confrontation is no way into the future, and insists: "No side should have dominance over the other." But you cannot help feeling it

may be too late for reconciliation.

Many Serbs now living here have themselves been expelled from their homes - for example, from the Krajina region of Croatia. The Serb authorities did not want them in Belgrade, and promised them "re-

ception centres" in Kosovo. It was a lie; there were no reception centres, they have been abandoned.

The words of Edith Durham, written in 1909, seem horrifically apposite today. "Inevitably fixed in the breast of the Albanian is the belief

that the land has been his rightly for all time ... It has been an elemental struggle for existence and survival of the strongest, carried out in relentless obedience to nature's law, which says 'There is not place for you both. You must kill - or be killed'."

Yeltsin avoids clash on choice for PM

MOSCOW (AP) - The Russian parliament's lower house yesterday postponed the vote on Boris Yeltsin's nominee for prime minister after the President offered lawmakers a face-saving way out of a looming showdown.

Mr Yeltsin revoked his ear-

lier nomination of 55-year-old Sergei Kiriyenko and resubmitted his candidacy in a letter that reached the State Duma early yesterday.

The move, a legal formality giving the house an extra week to consider the candidate, was taken "for the sake of preserv-

ing political stability and public accord."

The President has been feuding with the Communists and other hard-liners in the Duma over the formation of a new government since he abruptly sacked the previous one on 23 March. The hard-lin-

ers oppose Mr Kiriyenko's candidacy, citing his youth and lack of experience. They want a role in forming the new government and seek to scale back the President's free-market economic policies.

Mr Yeltsin initially ignored the demands and threatened to

dissolve the Duma unless it approves his choice; but he now appears willing to compromise. He has agreed to hold broad discussions with his legislative opponents next week and suggested that they propose candidates for ministerial posts in the new government.

Mr Yeltsin has also said he will retain key members of the outgoing cabinet and has no plans to reverse his economic course.

However, the Communist leader Gennady Zyuganov, warned that his faction - the Duma's largest - would reject Mr Kiriyenko in spite of Mr Yeltsin's compromise steps. He also said the Communists would only propose their candidates to the cabinet if the President agrees to revise his economic policies.

Israel tells Palestinians it was not behind assassination

By Patrick Cockburn in Jerusalem

ISRAEL was trying hard yesterday to persuade Palestinians that it was not behind the mysterious death of Muhyideen al-Sharif, the Islamic militant and bomb-maker.

Ami Ayalon, head of Israel's internal security, saw Yasser Arafat, the Palestinian leader, after midnight. An Israeli source said: "Ayalon stressed to Arafat that Israel was not responsible for Sharif's death and Arafat briefed Ayalon on the Palestinian investigation."

The controversy over who killed Sharif is important because Hamas, the organisation to which he belonged, has said it will make revenge attacks. Is-

raelis and Palestinians both think these are near inevitable, despite an increase in security. Benjamin Netanyahu, the Israeli Prime Minister, says he will hold Mr Arafat's Palestinian Authority responsible for whatever happens.

The argument for Israeli involvement rests on motive, *modus operandi* and the pathologist's report. Sharif was the member of the military wing of Hamas most wanted by Israel because of his involvement in organising suicide bombings. Israel has previously assassinated Hamas leaders. The last such attempt, in Amman, Jordan last year, involved an elaborate attempt to conceal the identity of those behind the killing.

The pathologist's report says

Sharif was shot dead three hours before the explosion which mutilated his body. None of this is conclusive. But as Palestinians see Mr Netanyahu as reneging on an agreement to withdraw from the West Bank, they are unlikely to give Israel the benefit of the doubt.

Mr Sharif's funeral in Ramallah was attended even by moderate Palestinian leaders such as Faisal Hussein. He said: "Sharif is a Palestinian martyr and Israel is responsible for his death." He claimed that on the same weekend Israel had rebuffed Dennis Ross, the US peace envoy, it also sent an assassination squad into an autonomous Palestinian enclave, adding: "The peace process cannot go on like this."



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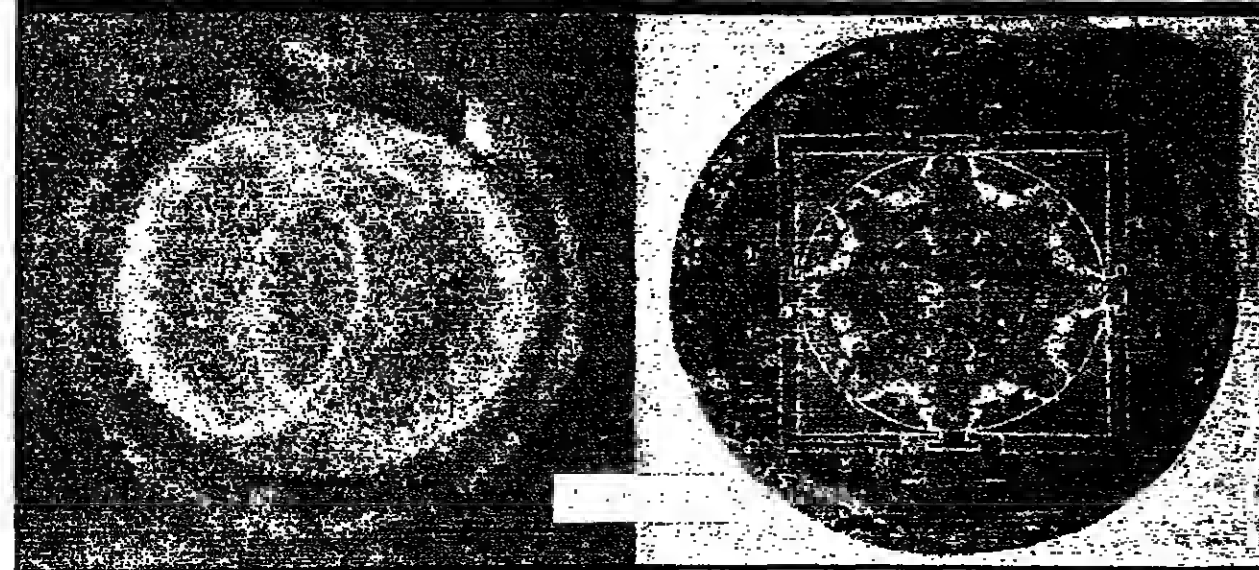
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Optimism: Japanese Prime Minister, Ryutaro Hashimoto, tells the Second Asia-Europe Meeting in London yesterday 'that the worst has come and gone' in the region's economic crisis
Photograph: Michael Stephens/PA

Positive gloss fails to dispel fears over Asian economy

By Rupert Cornwell

WORLD leaders yesterday put on an optimistic face over the Asian crisis, but could not dispel two fears: that Japan is not doing enough to help restore the region's economic health, and that the crisis may destroy some countries' faith in the trade and market liberalisation touted as the means to solve it.

Both Tony Blair and his Japanese counterpart, Ryutaro Hashimoto, used their opening speeches to the second Asia-Europe (Asem) summit in London yesterday to promise that the two giant trading blocs would co-operate to find a lasting solution. Europe was not a "fair-weather friend", Mr Blair insisted, meeting criticism from Japan and elsewhere that the EU was not pulling its weight in helping Asia tackle its difficulties.

Other European leaders argued that Japan's problems were nowhere near as bleak as

painted - most notably this week by Norio Ohta, head of the Sony electronics giant, who declared that the country was tumbling into recession.

Yesterday Mr Hashimoto sounded almost truculent. "The worst has come and gone," he declared, and "we are now seeing new steps forward" - a reference to the improving financial picture in South Korea, Thailand and Malaysia, if not Indonesia, which will need a \$3bn World Bank aid package, quite apart from the \$43bn financial bailout now apparently close to being agreed with the International Monetary Fund.

Mr Hashimoto further insisted that with the \$124bn economic stimulus package tabled last month, his country was playing its part in rescuing Asia. Not only was Japan the main source of economic support for the region, but it would "take the necessary measures" at home also.

But dismal new indicators have reinforced doubts about Japan's health, and familiar worries that promised measures would ever make it to the statute book. Pointedly, the British government spokesman yesterday declined to say that in the UK view, Japan was doing enough.

The EU's external trade commissioner, Sir Leon Brittan, warned that some aspects of Japan's scheme might be "subject to further study or delayed implementation". It was essential, he said, that the package contained "permanent and substantial" tax cuts.

In their final statement today, the 10 Asian and 15 European leaders attending the summit will acknowledge that the crisis is not yet over and that "vigilance" is still required. They will also pledge to resist protectionism, and press on with liberalisation of both trade and their own internal markets.

Most significantly, they will stress the importance of measures to help the poor. The draft circulating yesterday spoke of the need to consider the "social aspects of the current financial difficulties", and to "protect social expenditures" and preserve a safety net to help the poor.

At one level this responds to the unrest starting to surface in the region as recession bites. But the EU is also trying to prevent the crisis destroying the belief of less advanced countries in the very merits of deregulation and liberalisation.

As Chuan Leekpai, the Thai Prime Minister, said, this crisis could "put into question the value of an open economy". Developing countries, he warned, were less prepared to handle the challenges of liberalisation. It was vital they not be discouraged by what had happened in Asia, or use it as an excuse to close their economies to the outside world.

Is Japan finished? No: just in recession

By Richard Lloyd Parry
in Tokyo

ANYONE panicking about the "collapse" of the Japanese economy, which the head of Sony, Norio Ohta, predicted this week, would do well to save up their money, jump on a plane, and pay a visit to the centre of the upheaval and chaos - the doomed city of Tokyo.

Squeeze on to the busy but immaculate subway and travel to the area known as Shibuya, full of restaurants, amusement arcades and department stores. Look at the prices on the shelves, observe the weekend crowds, and notice the schoolgirls in their 800 outfits, with Fendi handbags and mobile phones. Ask yourself whether this looks like a city on the verge of meltdown.

Mr Hashimoto has warned that unemployment in Japan is rising to levels similar to those in Europe

Things are going badly for the Japanese economy but, when judging Mr Ohta's apocalyptic remarks, some perspective is necessary. For all the grim news, the situation in Japan is not even close to that of Indonesia, Thailand and South Korea, which have been driven to turn to the International Monetary Fund for rescue. The situation in Japan does not even compare to the economic suffering of Western Europe during the 1970s and 1980s.

Nobody would disagree that Japan is in trouble, and that the actions of its prime minister, Ryutaro Hashimoto, who is in London this week for talks with Asian and European counterparts, have done little to improve the situation.

The Nikkei share average in Tokyo fell by another percentage point yesterday after bigger tumbles earlier in the week and the yen weakened against the dollar to its lowest rate since 1992.

According to an official survey, businesses are gloomier than they have been for four years, and yesterday the credit agency, Moody's, changed its assessment of the Japanese economy from "stable" to "negative".

This is shocking to the Japanese. But to the rest of the world it is not so surprising that after more than 20 years of continuous growth the country is moving into a full recession.

When Mr Ohta talks of a collapse he means no more than this. When he spoke to Japanese reporters, a few hours before his speech in English, he spoke not of "collapse", but of "stalling" - a significant difference.

Recessions are unpleasant, but only by Japanese standards does Japan's present plight justify the use of a word like collapse. Unemployment is reaching undreamt of heights at 3.6 per cent, even though in Germany that figure would be hailed as a triumph. Yet, when trying to dramatise the gravity of Japan's plight, Mr Hashimoto warned that "unemployment numbers are on the verge of rising to levels comparable to those in Europe".

A few years of economic discomfort may even benefit Japan in the long run, by carrying off weak companies and clearing the field for the tougher specimens. This week, Japan launched its so-called "Big Bang", a five-year programme of financial deregulation to improve efficiency among banks and stockbrokers. It is a bold plan and Japan's finance companies and bureaucracies would never have been submitted to such radical steps if the economy were not in such a shaky state.

This is not to underestimate the importance of Japan's difficulties. Mr Ohta spoke of his fears for a deflationary spiral, and compared Mr Hashimoto to Herbert Hoover, the American president of the Twenties who was blamed for failing to stop the Great Depression.

The stricken economies of east Asia need happy, confident Japanese consumers to buy their exports. Without them, the pain afflicting Indonesia will take far longer to abate. It is there, if anywhere, that Japan's recession will cause true collapse, not in rich but gloomy Japan itself.

Downgraded, page 24

German threat to Le Pen

PROSECUTORS in Munich have asked for the French far-right leader Jean-Marie Le Pen's immunity against prosecution to be lifted following anti-Jewish comments allegedly made by him in the city. State prosecutor Helmut Meyer-Staude said a request had been sent from his office to the European Parliament, of which Mr Le Pen is a member.

— Reuters, Munich

Saddam's palaces inspected

UN inspectors and diplomats ended their first round of inspections of Iraq's presidential sites and plan to leave Baghdad today. Iraq's deputy prime minister Tariq Aziz who supervised the inspections on the Iraqi side praised the visits as a "triumph for truth over falsehood".

— Reuters, Baghdad

INDEPENDENT

ON SUNDAY

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Scenes from a mall: violent customers

STARING eyes, clenched fists, clenched teeth. Sweating, rapid breathing, foaming at the mouth, going red. These are the words written on the flip-chart at a training session for shopping-mall staff in coping with challenging behaviour from customers.

Dealing with shoppers nowadays isn't just about a polite exchange of words alongside the exchange of cash. The paying public can be difficult, rude – even violent. Rather than leave dealing with the tricky customers to security or private detectives, the managers of Cribbs Causeway, the out-of-town shopping complex near Bristol which opened this week, have decided to hold specific courses for all the 60 or more staff, from cleaners to top managers.

The training consultant, Jonathan Coles, begins to elaborate a modus operandi of appropriate response. "These are cues or clues that the situation is getting more serious for you. You are beginning to think about personal safety, and you need to apply some calming techniques."

The 10 trainees listen intently, and chip in with suggestions about what to do when faced with someone who is losing control. They could be simply frustrated or they could have forgotten to take essential medication. If someone is shouting, talk quietly, says Coles. If they're gesturing wildly, hold out your hands, palms out, in a gesture of submission.

You could try responding assertively, he says, but do it just once, and go back to calming if it doesn't work. Above all, never turn your back, and try to signal to a colleague or to the watching security cameras if you are in difficulty.

"The focus for staff in shopping centres is usually directed more to the criminal than the customer, and in dealing with violence," says the centre's manager, Jonathan Duckworth, who is also one of the trainees at the session.

"But you have to make the staff understand what people might want, rather than simply saying that they can't come in. We are a shopping centre not a battleground and we expect people to behave as if they are in a shopping centre. The behaviour of the public is going to be very, very good."

Assessments of other malls' performance suggests that around 300,000 people a week will visit the 130 shops. Cribbs Causeway has been designed as a very attractive environment for shoppers, light, clean and crisp, with a glazed atrium over the entire length. With 7,000 parking spaces, a leisure complex with a 12-screen multiplex cinema, and its location on the northern edge of Bristol, near to the M5 and M4 motorway network, Cribbs Causeway's catchment area stretches from Worcester to Tipton on the M5 and from Swindon to Swansea on the M4.

But while the new mall might be built for shopping till you're dropping, it's inevitably going to assume a whole range of meanings for the people who go there. And what about the mall-rats, those teenagers who make the mall their home from home, turning a retail environment into a theatre, complete with elaborately coded grooming and courtship rituals?

"They're our customers or potential customers, too", Duckworth says. "We have to treat people as individuals and not apply stereotypes. If there are types of behaviour that you don't like, you have to deal with them in other ways than simply going 'Oh! Stop!'. It has to be professional, just like shopping should be."

Back at the training session, it is revealed that the staff's ultimate weapon in dealing with awkward customers will be offering them a nice cup of tea. The touchy-feely management style has a very Californian feel to it, as befits the first mega-mall on England's laid-back west coast. But never, ever, turn your back – right?

Phil Johnson



An Englishman abroad: As the storm clouds gather over South-east Asia's economic miracle, our expertise in dealing with insolvency is more in demand than ever. Photograph: Reuters

Saving the Tigers

When your economy goes belly-up, there's only one thing for it: call in the Brits. John Willcock reports on the export boom in crisis management

WHEN Tony Blair promised leaders at the Asia Europe Meeting (ASEM) in London yesterday that Britain would do all it could to help sort out the Asian financial crisis, he failed to mention that we are already doing just that.

A British army of accountants and solicitors is involved in fixing the shambles, as effective in its way as any "Cool Britannia" export such as the Spice Girls. For this is one area where we already lead the world: sorting out companies that have gone belly-up, or rescuing ones that are going that way.

In the upside-down universe of the insolvency practitioner, what is good for the rest of us means lean times for the liquidator. This is why plane-loads of UK company rescue experts have been flying to the Far East to sort out the current financial crisis, leaving behind a UK economy with the lowest level

of receiverships since the Lawson boom of the 1980s.

It is a testament to the insolvency brigades' deliberately low profile that the Prime Minister probably did not have them in mind when he told Asian leaders yesterday: "We are not fair-weather friends, who turn away at the first sign of difficulty. But partners, for the long term, ready to stick by Asia through thick and thin."

Earlier this week, Sony chairman Norio Ohga warned that "the Japanese economy is on the brink of collapse". The sheer scale of the problems in Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia, South Korea and the rest of Asia is enough to make any liquidator salivate and any company-rescue expert flourish his slide rule. For example, Japan's banks have had debts of more than \$577bn (£358bn). That compares with a peak for the UK high-street banks of

£6bn in the last recession six years ago.

Then there is the Japanese insurance sector, which has premiums of \$510bn a year – as large as the US. And the Japanese life industry's assets total \$2,000bn. Shareholders' equity in life companies now stands at 1.3 per cent of assets. As Colin Bird, an insolvency partner with Price Waterhouse, says: "This leaves them with a bit of a capitalisation problem."

Visit any four-star hotel in a major Asian city and you will find it fully booked, with the pin-striped British in residence. The list of company rescue experts who have headed out east is distinguished: it includes Stephen Adamson and Nigel Hamilton, the heavyweights of Ernst & Young who rescued Canary Wharf. Both are heavily involved in the same work in Thailand. Then, there is Bird and his international team who have made a specialism of big, complicated insolvencies since taking the lead in unwinding Robert Maxwell's trans-Atlantic business empire.

Stephen Taylor is the partner at Coopers & Lybrand who sits in London and decides which partners are sent to which

part of the globe. As such, he has been closely watching events in Asia. Taylor is cautious about seeing Asia as a place for insolvency men to make money. "We haven't sent out aircraft carriers full of insolvency practitioners and plunked them in the South China Sea – we send people out as and when our clients want them," he says. Having said that, Coopers already has company-rescue people in Hong Kong, Kuala Lumpur and Singapore.

Recently, Coopers was appointed liquidator to CA Pacific, an investment bank in Hong Kong with many similarities to that other recent casualty, Peregrine, also in liquidation. Jan Blaauw, a Coopers partner, is lead liquidator of CA Pacific, and faces the problem of sorting out more than 11,000 client accounts, including business accounts as well as individual ones. The accounts are currently the subject of a legal dispute, and the liquidation promises to be a long and complicated one. Like Bird, Taylor identifies the willingness by governments to implement the IMF reforms as a key to the problem.

Just take a look at Thailand to understand the scale of what

has happened: 58 companies that lent to the property sector – where many of the problems started, forcing the country to devalue its currency – have been suspended. By the third quarter of 1997, a survey by Paribas-Asia Equity estimated that of 197 non-financial companies listed on the Thai Stock Exchange, only 19 were clearly not insolvent. Another 140 were bankrupt and 38 were hovering between being bust and insolvent.

Taylor recently mobilised 87 ex-patriate insolvency people to fly out to Thailand to deal with a wobbling financial institution, but, in the event, they were not needed. These ex-patriates came from not only the UK, but Canada, Australia, Hong Kong and Ireland, too.

Other firms have also brought in people from English-speaking countries, where insolvency laws are broadly similar. And there is the ubiquitous Neil Cooper, now with Buchler Phillips, who has been involved both with Maxwell and Asil Nadir, of Polly Peck fame. Cooper is an expert on cross-border insolvencies and about to take over the helm of INSOL, a global body dedicated

to improving multinational company rescue techniques. Then there are the lawyers, as any accountant will tell you, Taylor says. "There is a problem of hotel space," Cameron Markby Hewitt, Lovell White Durrant, Denton Hall and Allen & Overy are all out there.

With all these highly paid Brits disembarking at the airports, every insolvency man has stressed the need to act with sensitivity. "It's vital to work through local firms. These are proud people, after all," says Bird. Most UK practitioners advise local businesses to avoid selling assets at the bottom of the market, however desperate the situation may seem.

If – and it is still if – the Asian financial crisis does blow over and the various countries manage to reform their economies over the next three to five years, then UK insolvency practitioners will be able to take a significant share of the credit.

This isn't just happening in Asia. British practitioners have been dispatched to Russia, the Ukraine, central Europe, and Romania. Mind you, it is doubtful that Tony Blair will be keen to promote the slogan, "The UK: liquidator to the world."

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Digging up the past is a race against time

Anthea Gerrie on the archaeologists who are trying to rewrite history in an Oxfordshire rubbish dump

FRIDAY is the worst day of the week for the archaeologists of Stanton Harcourt. As they continue their dig in the Oxfordshire countryside for remains of a 200,000-year-old settlement, they are showered with a weekly delivery of domestic refuse. Time is of the essence. This is a landfill site, and the dig has less than a year to continue before it is completely filled in with rubbish.

In the midst of it all is a circle where the archaeologists keep searching for human remains they believe exist at a site previously thought uninhabitable by

man. They are working eight hours a day, six days a week, and employing extra helpers. As the weather warms up they will start wearing masks because the smell is so disgusting.

So far, the remains unearthed have included more than 1,000 large mammals – including woolly mammoths, elephant, bison, horse and deer – that prove there was a warm interglacial period in Britain 200,000 years ago.

But even more significant is the cache of beautifully made stone tools that Dr Katherine Scott, leading the dig, says

could not possibly have washed into the excavated gravel pit that was once a river bed from any other area.

"I am hoping and praying we will come across human remains before time runs out," says Dr Scott. "We have only been able to cover less than one third of the whole five-acre site in the time available."

Scott, a research fellow in prehistory at St Cross College, Oxford, works with her PhD student, Christine Buckingham, and a couple of helpers in the most foul conditions imaginable. "We are surrounded by garbage

and seagull droppings. Friday is a particularly bad day when all the domestic refuse arrives."

"But the site was long ago marked for waste disposal landfill, and we have been funded to the tune of £27,000 a year by the quarry owners."

Dr Scott became involved when a digger driver at the Stanton Harcourt quarry hit a tusk in 1989 and called her in to identify it. "It proved to be from a mammoth – the same in every respect as a woolly mammoth, except two-thirds the size, and given the temperature of the area, it's debatable

whether it had any wool on it."

The team set about combing the whole five-acre site and came across the remains of straight-tusked elephant as well as horse, deer, lion, hyena and brown bear, all dating back a quarter of a million years. However, all the bones, tusks and teeth may ultimately prove less important than bags of brown silt that the team has not yet had a chance to fully identify. "They contain up to 50 species of insect that will provide vital information once we have had a chance to catalogue them."

Alas, commercial consider-

Dr Katherine Scott at the waste site with a segment of a lion's jaw bone which is 250,000 years old. Photograph: John Lawrence

ations will impede full discovery of the site. "The owners have been tremendously co-operative, but we have already lost two acres and will lose half the remaining three in May."

She admits she is upset by the contrast between the rubbish tip of today and the landscape she has reconstructed. "When you stand with all the rubbish bags flapping around you and the machinery roaring in the distance, it's astonishing to think this was once a meadow with a river running through it and a forest nearby."

"The meadow is the key to human habitation: it used to be thought that man did not want to live in forestland, but the evidence of grassland in the area puts a whole new slant on things. We know the beautifully made hand axes and other tools were fashioned out of Wallingford stone, which would have had to be carried upstream. The quality of the handwork makes it hard to think of that species of early *homo sapiens* being all that much different from us."



How Bill Clinton neutered the feminist movement

The President's sordid affairs have drawn barely a murmur from America's powerful sisterhood. In an exclusive extract from the forthcoming issue of 'Vanity Fair', Marjorie Williams reveals some ugly truths

OKAY, class, let's review. The man in question has been sued for sexual harassment over an episode that allegedly included dropping his trousers to wiggle his erect penis at a woman who held a \$6.35-an-hour clerical job in the state government over which he presided. Another woman has charged that when she asked him for a job he invited her into his private office, fondled her breasts, and placed her hand on his crotch. A third woman conceded to friends that when she was a 21-year-old intern she began an affair with the man — much older, married, and the head of the organisation whose lowest employee she was. Actually, it was less an affair than a service contract, in which she allegedly dashed into his office, when summoned, to perform oral sex on him. After their liaison was revealed, he denied everything, leaving her to be portrayed as a tramp and a liar. Or, in his own words, "that woman".

Let us not even mention the former lover who was steered to a state job; or the man's alleged habit of using law-enforcement officers to solicit sexual partners for him; or his routine use of staff, lawyers, and private investigators to tar the reputation of any woman who tries to call him to account for his actions. Can you find the problems with his behaviour? Take your time: these problems are apparently of an order so subtle as to escape the notice of many of the smartest women in America — the writers, lawyers, activists, office holders, and academics who call themselves feminists.

When news broke that Independent Counsel Kenneth Starr was investigating whether President Clinton had lied under oath about his relationship with White House intern Monica Lewinsky, or encouraged others to lie, the cacophony that ensued was notable for the absence of one set of voices: the sisterly chorus that backed up Anita Hill seven years ago when her charges of sexual harassment nearly stopped Clarence Thomas's confirmation to the Supreme Court.

With very few exceptions, feminists were either silent or dismissive this time. "If anything, it sounds like she put the moves on him," said Susan Faludi, author of *Backlash*. Betty Friedan weighed in, but only to buff her outrage that Clinton's "enemies are attempting to bring him down through allegations about some dalliance with an intern... Whether it's a fantasy, a set-up or true, I simply don't care."

It was not until former White House volunteer Kathleen Willey appeared on 60 Minutes in mid-March to make public the allegation she had formerly made in a deposition — that Clinton had manhandled her during a private meeting in which she sought a paying job — that some feminists began to make reluctant noises of dismay. The National Organization for Women (NOW), which until then had found itself "unable to comment responsibly," averred that "Kathleen Willey's sworn testimony moves the question from whether the President is a 'womaniser' to whether he is a sexual predator."

But NOW's change of heart was by no means typical of feminist activists. Many others hung tough. Anita Perez Ferguson, president of the National Women's Political Caucus — the premier group promoting female participation in American politics — described Willey's charges as "quantity rather than quality, in terms of new feelings." She continued: "There's no question that it's disturbing... But to come to any judgment now is definitely not something that I think is timely."



intern," said a straight-faced Senator Carol Moseley-Braun on *Meet the Press*. Feminists have, all along, muffled, disguised, excused and denied the worst aspects of the President's behaviour with women — especially in their reactions to Paula Jones, whose sexual-harassment suit they have greeted with attitudes ranging from tepid boilerplate support to outright hostility. The chief reason for feminists' continued support of Clinton is clear: Clinton is their guy. Clarence Thomas was their enemy. Bob Packwood, a liberal Republican who was the next recognised boor to walk up to the plank, was a harder case for feminists, but in the end they tied the blindfold. Clinton, though, is the hardest case, because he is the most reliably supportive President they have ever had.

But if political opportunism is the main cause of their current blindness, it's not the only one. You can find in their reasoning a road map to everything that ails liberal feminism today: political self-dealing, class bias, and dedication to a bleak

vision of sexual "liberation" that has deprived them of what was once the moral force of their beliefs. So, it seems appropriate to say here that I am a feminist and a registered Democrat. Many of the feminist activists in Washington are women I've known for years as sources; I feel an open sympathy for much of the work they do. Yet, I also feel something close to fury over their failure to call Clinton to account for his actions. My anger may be bred, in part, by my own past willingness to "put in perspective" Clinton's questionable behaviour with women — enough, at least, to vote for him twice.

The individual pieces of the Clinton saga are complex, snaky things with their own tawdry confusions. But these are precisely the complications that Clinton has capitalised on. The truth is that, while a lot of the facts are murky, enough of them are clear. We have good evidence, for example, that Clinton, as governor of Arkansas, had

a state trooper escort Paula Jones to his suite at Little Rock's Excelsior Hotel during her work hours, and we know that she gave contemporaneous accounts of the meeting to several witnesses which closely track the allegations in her lawsuit. We know that there is extensive evidence of a relationship between Clinton and Lewinsky that has not been challenged by the administration. We know Arkansas state troopers have said under oath that Clinton used them to enable his sexual escapades in Little Rock. And we know that Clinton has lied about his past behaviour — including the sizeable lie that underlay the supposedly informed decision of the American people that they didn't care about his womanising: his elaborately careful 1992 denials of his affair with Gennifer Flowers.

Where America's women leaders have failed is in their unwillingness to draw even the most commonsensical conclusions from the evidence of Clinton's recklessness. It's plain enough why feminists want to keep Clinton in office. He is pro-choice: he signed into law the Family and Medical Leave Act, which had been vetoed twice by a Republican president; he favours affirmative action, which benefits women more than any ethnic group in the country; he has made childcare a policy priority this year. According to the Center for the American Woman and Politics, Clinton has appointed 10 of the 21 women who have served in Cabinet-level positions, including the first woman ever to be secretary of state or attorney general. And he appointed Ruth Bader Ginsburg to the Supreme Court.

While most of the Washington-based women's organisations that lobby and promote women's participation in electoral politics maintain a veneer of bipartisanship, a web of relationships links them to the Clinton administration. White House communications director Ann Lewis, who has been one of Clinton's fiercest defenders on television, was once the chair of the Democratic Task Force of the National Women's Political Caucus. Anita Perez Ferguson, who now chairs the caucus, formerly worked in the Clinton administration, as a White House liaison for the transportation department, and at the Democratic National Committee.

And then there's friendship: Hillary Rodham Clinton's friendships, in particular, may have neutralised some of the women who might otherwise be criticising Clinton. When I called Marjorie Margulies-Mozvinsky, who chairs the theoretically bipartisan Women's Campaign Fund, her assistant cheerfully told me, "I know that Marjorie has not made any comments about

recent" — here he stopped and groped for a word — "events? Just because she is friends with Hillary." When women activists were charging up the hill to oppose the nominations of Thomas and other conservative Reagan-Bush appointees, one of their comrades-in-arms was Melanne Verver, then the chief lobbyist for the liberal organisation People for the American Way, now the First Lady's chief of staff.

Feminist investment in Clinton has grown over time, even as the allegations about his sexual behaviour have increased. During Clinton's first campaign, women activists were suspicious of the "New Democratic" elements of his agenda. To this day, they remain angry at him for signing into law the radical welfare revisions of 1996, which overwhelmingly affect poor women.

But with that exception, there has been a sea change in their attitudes toward him. For one thing, after the congressional elections of 1994, they saw him as all they had standing between them and Newt Gingrich. For another, the 1996 election marked the first time the gender gap exceeded a president's margin of victory, and suddenly feminists had, in Clinton, a poster boy for the theory on which they had long based their claims to power. (Never mind that a scant minority of the women voters in question were voting on "feminist" issues; most were moderates who liked what Clinton had to say on education, jobs and crime.) At last, feminists felt that they had some real leverage with the White House.

There is a shift in elite opinion about both Clinton and sexual mores. Exhibit A was a bizarre 30 January gathering hosted by the *New York Observer* at the restaurant Le Bernardin, where 10 Manhattan "supergals" — including writers Katie Roiphe, Erica Jong, Nancy Friday and Francine Prose, designer Nicole Miller, former *Saturday Night Live* contributor Patricia Marx, and "retired dominatrix and writer" Susan Shellogg — were invited to drink wine and analyse the scandal.

The resulting exchange, published by the *New York Observer's* 9 February issue, was galactically strange. The women agreed that they liked Clinton better for having had a titillating affair; after all, he's kind of a hunk. Jong, for one, wants a president who is "alive from the waist down," and Marx declared him "cute and getting cuter all the time." They pronounced Starr (in Friday's words) "a big sissy," and speculated about whether Lewinsky had swallowed the President's semen. "Oh," squealed Jong, "imagine swallowing the Presidential come."

stations — are an established part of the country's elites: the media elite in New York, the political elite in Washington. And this is one of the major reasons they have failed to hold Clinton's feet to the fire. In casing past the contradictions of the feminist class system, Hillary Clinton is the crucial figure. It's common knowledge that she has been her husband's most important protector. "The fact that Hillary doesn't seem bothered by it gives women an excuse, in a way, to be tolerant of his behaviour," says Radcliffe Public Policy Institute fellow Wendy Kaminer.

But less appreciated is a second, more subtle way in which Hillary has shielded her husband. She is, in effect, his feminist bona fides. He may hit on women like Gennifer Flowers and Paula Jones, her presence says, but when it comes to sharing a home (and a presidency) he chose a woman like me. Again and again, feminists

cite the Hillary factor as mitigating evidence. Gloria Steinem told me: "He's married to a woman who's at least his equal, whom he clearly likes and respects."

In some ways, it's baffling that feminists can still argue seriously that one Hillary trumps a multitude of Monicas. Even leaving aside Clinton's repeated public humiliations of his wife, she's always been a dubious feminist heroine: after all, she married her power, and in the White House she has wielded it without accountability. In truth, there's an awful affront to women in the apparently sharp distinctions that Clinton draws between the kind of woman you marry and the kind of woman you seek out for pleasure. We were supposed to be doing away with the Madonna and the whore — or at least trying to integrate them.

If feminists had stopped to think of Monica Lewinsky as a real person, it might have slowed them down. The most grotesque aspect of the case is this determination to depict Lewinsky's end of the alleged affair as liberated, autonomous female sexuality in action, instead of as the pathetic picture it was, of a young woman seeking a dubious affirmation in all the wrong places. To be sure, the May-December romance is always a complex, two-way transaction. But what little we know of the Clinton-Lewinsky relationship suggests that in all of the specifics that matter — when he called, when and where they met, what they actually did with each other, and even when she was allowed to speak to him — the relationship was controlled (duh!) by the powerful, married, 50-ish man, not by the 20-something woman on the lowest rung of the status ladder.

Why do feminists find it so hard to acknowledge the ugliness of this arrangement? One reason is that Lewinsky's age is a very touchy point: if you have argued for years against parental consent laws for teenagers seeking abortions, you may feel hard-pressed to admit that many women in their early 20s are a few years shy of emotional maturity.

Among the most honest women I interviewed for this piece was Marie C. Wilson, president of the Ms. Foundation for Women, who related her experiences, early in her career, as a lobbyist for liberal causes in the Iowa legislature. "I knew how to talk about the kinds of emissions standards I wanted for Iowa companies, and what kind of childcare standards I wanted for the children of Iowa, and... *Would you please move your hand?*... And most times I didn't get the emissions standards or the childcare. Now," she says of Clinton's presidency, "I've gotten emissions standards and I've got better childcare, and I've still got the hand. But that's better than the other way."

A very few women were willing to make this argument directly: that feminists could find some honour in making a dispassionate, tough-minded decision that Clinton's value in office outweighs the sordidness of his personal life. But making this argument is something different from simply sweeping his behaviour under the rug; it's the pretence, above all, that does the damage.

And this is why the feminist failure matters. By wishing the problem away, feminists call into question one of their most important victories of the past decades: the hard-won consensus that men should not use social and economic power to recruit sex partners in the workplace, and that it's fair for both sexes to expect limits on how much sexual relations are allowed to distort the system of rewards. I'm talking here not about feminist legislative achievements, but about a shift in the extra-legal realm of mores, the shift that followed and ratified the actual laws against specific forms of sexual harassment.

It's all very well to protest that we shouldn't look to our politicians as role models: the saga of Clinton's sex life is being played out on too large a screen to ignore. You can say until you're blue in the face that public men are entitled to a realm of privacy; that certain kinds of bad private behaviour do not necessarily conflict with political competence, or even genius; and that adultery is not in itself of feminist concern. These are all irrelevancies. This mess is on our hands, and we do not have the luxury of arguing with its existence; the best we can do is call it what it is.

Denial is insidious: it always claims more than you think you have added to it. "We would not be doing our job if we didn't take into account that this president and his policies are crucial to the lives and welfare of the majority of women in this country," Gloria Steinem assures me. "That's not bending over backwards; that's being sensible. Having said that, if Clinton had raped women, beaten up Hillary — real private sins would not be forgiven, no matter what the value of the public behaviour."

There it is, *fellas*, in case you're still confused: it seems we just lowered the bar.

The full text of this article will appear in the May issue of *Vanity Fair* out in the UK from Wednesday, 8 April.

The individual pieces of the Clinton saga are complex, snaky things with their own tawdry confusions

Hillary is the crucial figure — in effect, his feminist beard, the symbolic guarantor of his political bone fides

Power of the spoken word

Watching Peter Ackroyd read from his new work on Sir Thomas More is an experience in itself, says Michael Glover

HOW WAYWARD is the emotional trajectory of any human life! How subject to change and mutability! These ponderous Elizabethan thoughts flashed like a shooting star through my mind in the basement at Waterstone's, Camden Town, last night, as I observed the mood of that cheerleader of the cockney visionaries, Peter Ackroyd, shift from near-Stygian gloom to one of unabashed hilarity within the space of one brief hour of our life on this earth.

Ackroyd was sitting wedged between "Popular Psychology"

and it was miserably, listlessly told, with Ackroyd dawdling and wenching out the words as if they had the dead weight of so many cannonballs attached to his ankles. It was not so much the death itself as the manner of the dying. Though disembowelment was avoided thanks to More's faithful services to the King, there was still the unpardonably uncomfortable business of having to lay one's head down on that heap of straw, stay perfectly still for a second or two while the executioner stifled a yawn, and, later, suffer the indignity of having others gawp at it, freshly boiled, and stuck up there on a pole as a public warning.

When he laughs, he weaves his body sideways, as if wishing to get rid of it

and "Pregnancy and Child Care" on a precarious-looking, fold-up chair of the kind that a man may choose to sit on when, frankly, there is no serious alternative. Directly in front of him sat a small, yet eager and discerning audience listening to him read from the final pages of his doleful, freshly published life of Sir Thomas More. Among those closest to him was the young Frenchman whose chair would collapse beneath him during question time, throwing him to the ground. He had not read a word by Ackroyd until that point. It had been a miserable end - Sir Thomas More's, that is -

work in progress. Fiction? Biography? That customary, artful mingling of the two? Or something yet bolder still? was shocked into a true engagement with life by that unfortunate accident.

Yes, when the Frenchman fell off the chair, a great whoop of laughter went up - and Ackroyd's contribution was the most heartfelt, the most vigorous, of us all. When Ackroyd laughs, he heaves his small, hulky body sideways as if wishing to get rid of it altogether. The Frenchman picked himself up. Ackroyd mumbled a few hollowish words of commiseration, slugged at his glass of white wine, lit a fag, crossed his legs, and everything lightened and loosened.

The audience, wishing to be helpful, suggested a few people whom he might wish to write biographies of - such as Bacon. Ackroyd wondered whether that meant the philosopher or the dauber. The dauber. Ackroyd scoffed. There were already four in the making. And anyway, he was heartily sick of biography-making - there were far too many of those great, fat tomes being heaved like so many house bricks across the Atlantic.

Oh what a lovely coup for Milton Keynes

Oh What A Lovely War - National Theatre at Milton Keynes

WOULD anyone in his right mind want to spend a rain-swept evening in a tent on a hill in Milton Keynes? It's a taste, you would have thought, likely to be confined to the odd Milton Keynesian crazed with nostalgia for his Scout days. On Thursday, though, a capacity audience gathered in a custom-built 'Big Top' in this wondrous spot for the official premiere of the 1998 National Theatre Mobile production - *Oh What A Lovely War* - directed by Fiona Laird.

To get Joan Littlewood - from whose fabled Theatre Workshop this collaboratively-evolved musical about the horrors and futility of the First World War sprang in the 1960s - even this close to the National, has required the trickiest and most tactful feats of diplomacy. Littlewood anathematises institutions she regards as middle-class and monopolistic and when she granted Laird the performance rights to the show, it was stipulated that the National, the RSC and the West Yorkshire Playhouse were no-go areas.

Laird's *Oh What A Lovely War* is a National Theatre production that will never go inside the National Theatre building (its London venue is in Bernie Spain Gardens, One Tower Wharf).

The roving Big Top idea is cogent both on ideological grounds (community outreach being very much in the Littlewood spirit) and on aesthetic ones (a glittery circus atmosphere should work

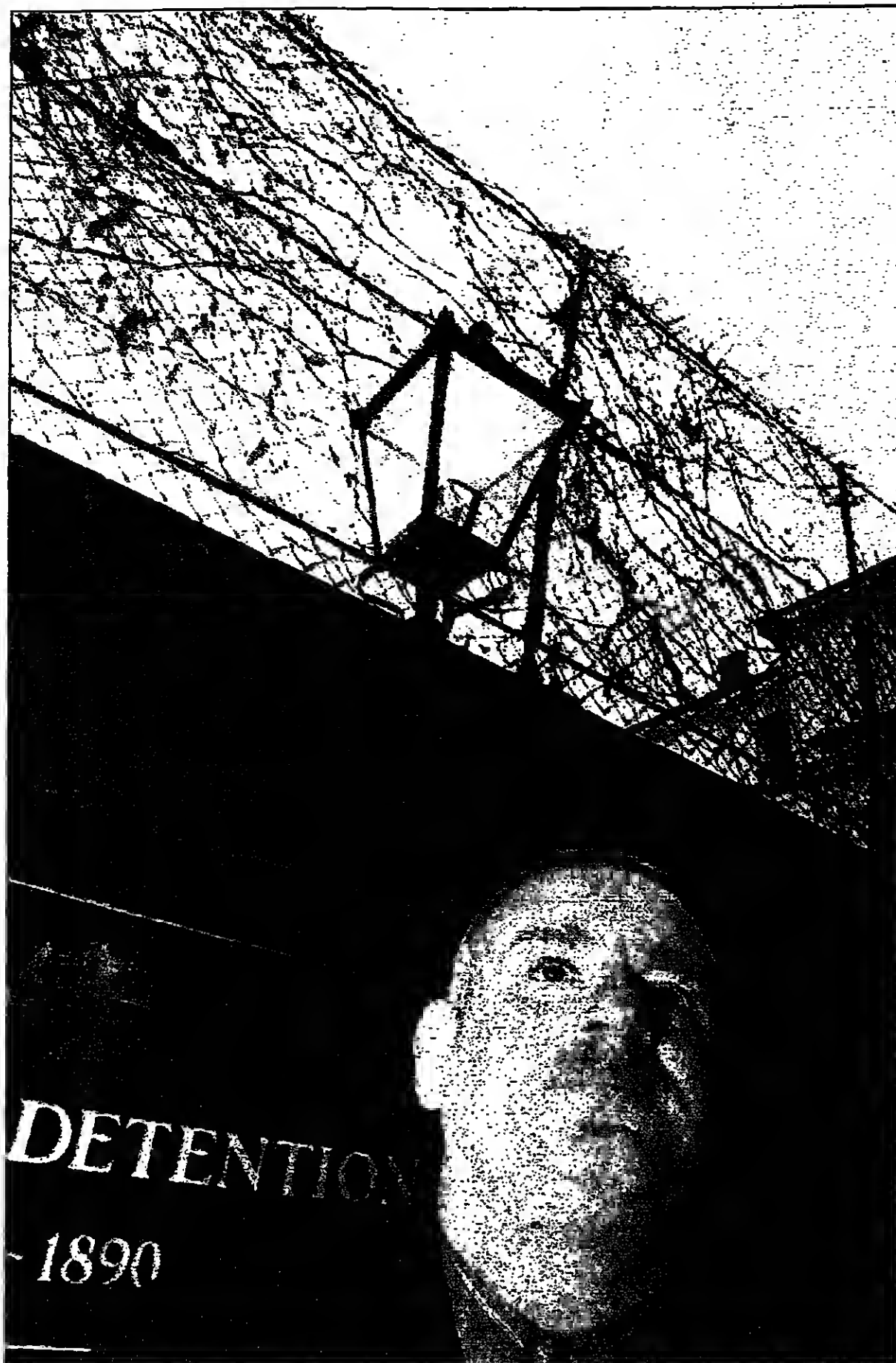
well for a show that depends upon the bracing clash between the horrific content and the end-of-the-pier style Pierrot presentation). In the event, though, for me, the juxtaposition failed to be jarring enough in this production. It offers a "good night out" in altogether too conventional a sense.

I overheard a young man in the interval, saying that "when those Germans came on, I was just in bits". He was referring to the rather well-handled sad/comic Christmas fraternalism scene between the two sides, but here the production was allowing him and others to indulge in a sort of comfortable sentimentality, whereas this is a show whose very British twist on the Brechtian should inspire a less humiliating pity.

Some of the cartoon-like sketches (international arms manufacturers imagined annihilating innocent bird life at a grouse-shooting party) have the right grotesque attack. But, in general, the vital balance between the documentary aspects (the appalling statistics that slide past on a news panel; the photographic images of trench warfare) and the song and dance performance elements feel skewed in favour of the latter. In some sense, the Real War gets upstaged. A showbiz slickness has a tendency to creep into areas where roughness would be preferable.

There are moments of very affecting, unadorned simplicity in this production, but the overall effect is too professionally "feel-good".

Paul Taylor



History man: In one short hour, Ackroyd shifted from near-Stygian gloom to unabashed hilarity Rex Features



Affecting: David Grant (left), Karl Morgan and David Birrell in *Oh What A Lovely War* Nobby Clark

THE TEMPEST

by William Shakespeare

'Unmissable' Sunday Times

'David Calder's Prospero confirms him as one of the great Shakespearians... outstanding' Sunday Times

'Adrian Noble's dream-like production is fresh, lucid and authoritative' Independent on Sunday

Also playing this week

THE MERCHANT OF VENICE by William Shakespeare <i>'Gregory Doran's spectacular production'</i> Evening Standard <i>'Philip Voss is a superb Shylock'</i> Sunday Telegraph THIS PRODUCTION IS SPONSORED BY LLOYDS	TWELFTH NIGHT by William Shakespeare <i>'A seriously enchanting production... Helen Schlesinger... amongst the best I have seen'</i> Sunday Times	MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING by William Shakespeare <i>'Magic... Michael Boyd's brilliantly imaginative production'</i> Sunday Times	CYMBELINE by William Shakespeare <i>'Adrian Noble's production has "RSC Major Success" stamped all over it'</i> Observer
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BOX OFFICE 0541 541051

They have ways of not making you laugh

Quatsch in Store German comedians at the Comedy Store

WHEN I told people I was going to the Comedy Store to watch an evening of German comedy, they said: "There's German comedy?" The elation of the response told me this was more than incredulity; this was outrage, of the "We make the jokes round here thank you" kind.

We do not believe Germans have a sense of humour, and if they do, it shouldn't be allowed. It doesn't fit their stereotype, and it offends ours. It's our job to find the world funny, larky and ironical. It's *their* job to do things thoroughly. We

make fun: they make Audis. It's somewhere in the United Nations Charter small print. The very pairing of the words "German" and "humour" seems so outrageous that you wonder if it isn't all an elaborate joke.

Well, sad to say, there is such a thing as German comedy, though only Germans understand it. Whether it is funny or not is still open to debate, as Thomas Hermanns, Lutz von Rosenberg, Lipinsky, Detlef Winterberg and Django Asül, the four male comedians brought over here by Quatsch (Germany's first and only comedy club, on Hamburg's Reeperbahn), took the precaution of performing their material in a language not

widely understood. I didn't think this would matter, as much British stand-up can be understood simply by knowing the words for certain bodily parts. Also, my German vocabulary includes the phrases *vorspring durch technik*, *Engländer, für you ze war is over*, *DAKA-DAKA-DAKA!!!*, and *kinder, kirche und küche*, so I thought I would be able to appreciate the essence of German comedy. I was over-optimistic. I was unable to grasp an entire punch-line.

I can't, though, without prejudice, make one or two empirical observations. The first is that there was a stretch Mercedes parked outside, an accessory most British comedians

south of Bernard Manning would find quite alien, if not funny.

The second is that the evening was civilised to the point of seriousness. Unlike English comedians, these looked as though they had washed properly and their clothes were sound. Also they didn't swear. Either that or they swore all the time: it was impossible to tell. The mostly German audience behaved itself and laughed respectfully in all the right places. There was none of the *sturm und drang* typical of British stand-up events; no bastard at the back shouting "Die, fuckwit!"

I had just started to wonder what the performers would do

if they were faced with a heckler, when the English sound man started talking loudly to his mate in the sound box. The performer did nothing, but the audience turned as one and frowned. This is how Germans deal with hecklers.

German humour may appear harmless, but it could set a worrying precedent. In time Belgians, Danes and Luxembourgers may think they're funny too. And the next thing you know we'll have an EU joke mountain, an international embarrassment which no number of goodwill convos to the unhappy people of Ethiopia will be able to reduce.

Martin Plimmer

THE WEEK IN RADIO ROBERT HANKS

THERE'S something of a pre-apocalyptic feel about Radio 4 as the station prepares for the big turnaround by offering the lucky listener the chance to survey past glories (i.e. they've stuffed the schedules with repeats). Across this bush floats the central argument of this week's *Analysis* (Radio 4, Thursday): is culture "dumbing down", or is it just that knowledge is more widely available? David Walker's fretting through this warren of a theme was timely enough to make you wonder if there had been some Machiavellian thinking behind this piece of scheduling - James Boyle bopping to sow enough doubt and confusion among his critics to frustrate any full-frontal attack.

Walker did indeed moot the idea that if Radio 4 gets a lot of flak, "all it will mean is that

the Leviathan inside which I am now sitting is in motion, and some people are prone to cultural travel sickness"; but there was enough sceptical irony in this formulation to make you think he wasn't a wholehearted subscriber. The academic and critic Marilyn Butler argued persuasively that encouraging children to think and talk might mean sacrificing something in the way of "correctness", but the price was well worth paying, and others pointed out that talk of high intellectual standards can be the cover for unpleasantly undemocratic attitudes. But sensible and sympathetic thinking was yoked to grossly obvious inverted snobbery and half-baked populism - David

Elstein, head of Channel 5, suggested that the educated know least about what television can do (presumably, Channel 5's schedules are arranged over high table at All Souls).

The real conflict here, though, was not between high and low or dumb and clever, but between tradition and modernity. The line taken by Nicholas Kenyon, controller of Radio 3, seemed to be that we shouldn't let the past keep peering over our shoulders.

Still, tradition can never be stamped out. When the new Radio 4 schedules get started on Monday, however wondrous they are, thousands of listeners will complain to Chris Dunkley on *Feedback*, as their forefa-

thers did before them. It sort of makes your proud, doesn't it?

Meanwhile, while we're talking about declining standards, you have to wonder what kind of society condones series like *The Hard Men* (Radio 5, Monday), a celebration of what's euphemistically called "the physical side" of football. In the first programme, Liverpool's

Tommy Smith explained that only half a dozen times has he gone in to hurt somebody, and he still has nightmares about it. But you'll be glad to know that, for all his guilt, he can manage to laugh heartily when describing how he butted a German player who giggled at him. A heartwarming tale of adversity overcome, really.

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Time to surrender the old hatreds

TO ECHO Tony Blair's words about the Northern Ireland peace process we remain "cautiously, stubbornly optimistic". Of course, there are big questions that still need to be resolved as we enter the endgame. The powers of the new North-South body are especially troublesome. But we suspect that the momentum and will for peace are now too great to be defeated. It is at this point, when the peace process becomes a peace settlement, that it will move into its most dangerous phase.

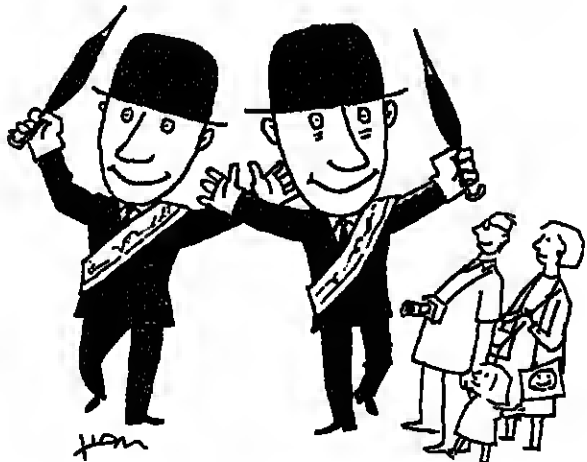
We worry about the response of the Provisional IRA. It may well be that they ultimately find the deal unacceptable. The new arrangements will, after all, be unlikely to deliver a 32-county united Ireland even on a distant horizon. Hardline republicans, then, might not give up, but, as in the past, respond by changing their tactics. How? Consider the assessment of the ex-IRA man Sean O'Callaghan, who told the BBC *Today* programme that the IRA's future strategy would revolve around "the politics of tension". As he put it: "You will get enough violence to make you aware of their presence and their capability and enough to keep Northern Ireland in a constant state of unease."

What will not change is their opportunism. The IRA long ago arrogated to itself the right to be the sole "protector" of the nationalist community. It did this by ruthlessly exploiting real and imagined grievances. As we approach the Ulster marching season, it must not now be granted new tensions to capitalise on.

The decision of the independent Commission on Parades to prevent the Apprentice Boys from marching in the Lower Ormeau Road in Belfast should be respected. As the chairman of the Commission, Alistair Graham, said: "Our view is that the best way forward in terms of relieving inter-community tensions arising from disputes at this location is that the ground should be prepared for one or more parades to take place in a peaceful atmosphere". He is right. A Unionist spokesman recently said: "The Orangemen didn't walk their traditional routes last year in the interests of the greater good but there has been no good faith shown to the Unionist community by the Government." Whether or not the British government has treated them badly the greater good has not gone away. No Mowlem should uphold the Commission's judgement against appeals by the loyalists.

In fact the British and Irish governments and Northern Irish politicians themselves have served their peoples during this peace process very well. But priceless though their work and the efforts of bodies like the Commission on Parades is, we are still waiting for an adequate response from the Orange movement. They fail to see that unless they respond there will be plenty of less triumphal anniversaries for them and their children and their grandchildren to mark. They need to think the unthinkable. They must emasculate their own ways. They must see how much more hope there would be if the Orange marches were sanitised, filled of political meaning and could be made as harmless and empty of offence as other charming customs whose origins are lost in time, like Morris dancing, the State Opening of Parliament or the persecution of Peter Mandelson.

We are not so naive as to think that it would be easy to persuade the chaps whose catchphrase is "No Surrender" immediately to start skipping down the Falls Road with little bells tied to their bowlers and the customary "serious clashes" confined to their broilings. We also know that you cannot wish away historical hatreds. The fate of the former Yugoslavia shows that conflict can be cryogenically preserved for centuries, and quickly and easily re-



vitalised. (The current conflict in the Kosovo region rests on the mystical importance of a battle that took place there in 1389). But what one could call the "folkification" of Ulster's sectarian traditions cannot start soon enough.

Of course our modest proposal will not be taken up by the "loyal brethren" who will fight for their "civil rights". So as a last indulgence let us celebrate a different anniversary. Twenty-five years ago Ulster politicians and the British and Irish governments signed the Sunningdale agreement. This set up a Northern Ireland power-sharing executive and a PR assembly, and made provision for a cross-border body (the "Council of Ireland"). It was soon brought down by the actions of hardline grassroots activists and an upsurge in sectarian violence. There was little that the Army or the British or Irish government could do. It was, until now, the end of self-government for the province. This settlement will be superior. It will, through the twin referendums on both sides of the border, be more legitimate. This time, we hope, the "grass-roots" will be more supportive and not give the hard men their chance to wreck the settlement. They could start by leaving the sashes their fathers wore at home this year.

An amusing little concoction

HERE IS a story to cheer anyone who has plumped blindly for the third-cheapest wine on the list, and nodded knowingly at the pleasant yet entirely unexcited taste when asked to sample it. Edward Jeffries was fined £4,750 under the Trade Descriptions Act this week for selling wine from a kit as "estate grown" on his Cornish vineyard. That's right, a Cornish vineyard. Suspicion about the feasibility of such a project - it turns out you can't grow grapes in those parts - prompted trading standards officers to investigate this *appellation inconnue*. It turned out Mr Jeffries had resorted to a do-it-yourself wine-making kit, added sugar and water, and sold the results for upwards of £5 a bottle.

Now, most of us have no idea what English wine is supposed to taste like, beyond a vague folk memory of something undrinkable called Concord in the Seventies. Many of us, in truth, would have difficulty telling a Chilean Merlot from a tin of boot polish. As long as Chateau Jeffries used good-quality kits, everyone was happy. Especially Mr Jeffries, making a £30,000-a-year profit from following simple instructions and sticking on bogus labels.

Even the prosecution had to admit to Falmouth magistrates: "People were buying what they had tasted and liked." It seems churlish, then, to complain that the wording on the label did not correspond precisely with the contents. For most people the whole point of drinking is to get away from such unnecessary attention to detail. Another glass anyone?

Ulster's Titanic

THE NORMALLY estimable Robert Fisk writes an interesting article on the symbolism of the *Titanic* (Comment, 30 March). However he gets one major symbol totally wrong, as did the film.

Titanic was not built by Irishmen, nor is it part of an Irish story. The *Titanic* was built by Ulstermen, which is what nearly all of them would most vocally have proclaimed. This goes to the heart of what the current, and past, troubles and partition are all about.

The shipyards of Belfast were the heartland of Ulster Unionism; sectarian riots from the mid-nineteenth century on almost invariably centred upon workers from the yards (over 95 per cent Protestant).

Ulster was not only Protestant but industrial (the only such part of Ireland) and from the 1860s, when the shipyards of Belfast were founded, this industry depended upon capital, raw materials, skilled labour and markets that lay in Britain and the Empire. Industry needed the Union to survive and prosper, and nothing came to symbolise the equation of Ulster's prosperity, industry and the Union more than the shipyards.

This industrial identity was the very thing that Irish nationalism failed against. It asserted a rural peasant identity. Irish nationalists attacked industrial Ulster as un-*Irish*, a second-class Lancashire that corrupted Ireland and undermined the noble peasant spirit. This was a common theme of most ethnic nationalists, and is well illustrated by de Valera's 1937 constitution and his radio homilies on Irish life.

Thus the *Titanic* symbolised, to Irish nationalists, all that they were fighting against. It symbolised modernity and Britishness, the key to Belfast shipyard workers' identity. Hence the vehemence of Ulster Unionism's rejection of Irish identity and their assertion of their own separate identity and very real interests.

Thus references to the ship being built by Irishmen stand as a symbol of the muddled thinking on Ulster and why the current talks may well fail. For Sinn Féin continues that nationalist tradition of ignoring real differences; hence also its lack of any economic policy that even begins to address the real world. Irish nationalism has never addressed the different economic base of Ulster, although claiming a jurisdiction over it. *Titanic* symbolises Ulster's Britishness, that which Irish nationalism would destroy. And this is still a key factor in understanding Northern Ireland.

JAMES DINGLEY
Centre for the Study of Conflict
University of Ulster
Jordanstown

Dangerous database

I WAS appalled to read your report (2 April) about a proposed government database holding all educational and other achievements for every citizen in the UK. It terrifies me that a scheme like this might succeed.

There is an element of window-dressing and deception that goes into a CV, which we all use to our advantage. How many of us have omitted from our CVs a failed GCSE, or a year spent retaking a failed exam, or worse?

A database would record your every success and every failure. It would enable employers to write off job applicants automatically who have experienced some minor check such as an exam failure.

I can see marginal benefits for big business in the use of such a database, but I am worried about those who are then so easily excluded from the chance to present their best features and make a success for themselves in employment.

PAUL SERJEANT
Berkshire

WILL THE planned electronic CV contain "bad" things about me such as a bad reference? Will it not contain my criminal record? Who will



Protestant bastion: workers at the Harland & Wolff shipyard in Belfast in 1954

Photograph: Hulton Getty

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Post letters to Letters to the Editor and include a daytime telephone number
Fax 0171 293 2056; e-mail: letters@independent.co.uk E-mail correspondents are asked to give a postal address. Letters may be edited for length and clarity.

control it? Who will update or amend it? Who will decide its format? Who will have access to it? The police, my neighbours? How big and complex a national system will be needed to prevent unauthorised access to it?

If we successfully address all these issues, do we not end up with a CV written by me, in my style, controlled by me on my own computer and used by me at the right time, when I want to apply for jobs - in other words, just what we have now?

PHILIP MORGAN
Winchester

THIS IS real 1984 stuff. The proposed electronic curriculum vitae would tend to stifle the mobility required in any healthy society since all those who underachieve through

ill health, poor education or deprived social backgrounds would be marked out permanently. No democracy of free people should accept such totalitarian ideas.

KEITH HUTCHINSON
London SW14

CAN I include "writing to *The Independent* and telling the Government where they can stick their electronic CV" among my list of achievements?

HOWARD INGRAM
Belfast

Capitalism in China

WORLD leaders attending the Euro-Asian summit in London will, no doubt, reaffirm the superiority of the western economic model of development. It is worth noting that

since Deng Xiaoping's reform and modernisation of the commune system began in 1978, unemployment has risen inexorably.

Premier Zhu has been praised by our own Prime Minister for his membership of the "modernisers' club" and unquestionably we owe China a debt of gratitude for not devaluing her currency in the still continuing Asian economic crisis. The internal cost to the Chinese people, however, is considerable. Capital-intensive investment by western companies has skewed development to the coastal enterprise zones, exacerbating rural/urban divisions and is hardly a panacea in a country desperately in need of labour-intensive solutions.

RICHARD DE ZOYSA
South Bank University
London SE1

QUOTE UNQUOTE

"They ain't gaffes. They are ideas. If you don't like them, fair enough. If you think they are rubbish, by all means say that they are. But they ain't gaffes."

— Tony Banks, sports minister, defending the occasional outbursts which have landed him in trouble.

"Handouts are what toffs give to bums on skid row. Handouts are the middle-class's munificence to the poor."

— Lord Hattersley, Labour peer, citing the Secretary of State for Social Security, Harriet Harman, for describing social security payments as handouts.

"This has been a week when the Downing Street press officer, still only a minor figure in world history, was discovered addressing a Secretary of

State in peremptory terms which would have been offensive if used to an office boy. Who does this man Alastair Campbell think he is?"

— Lord Rees-Mogg, an Alastair Campbell's chastising memo to Harriet Harman and her deputy Frank Field.

"We have to speak up. It's time for people who care about the arts to stop being so nice."

— Deborah Bull, Royal Ballet solo dancer.

"I, for one, will not be worrying much about my microchip-controlled toaster."

— Professor Anthony Finkelstein, Cambridge computer scientist, claiming fears about the Millennium Bug are greatly exaggerated.

Slaves of the screen

WHAT IS Tim Hulse talking about? ("A television is for life", 3 April.) I haven't watched television (apart from chance moments in friends' houses, where it always seems to be on) for about two years and yes, dammit, I am a more rounded person for that.

Many people I meet express surprise and puzzlement: what do I do with all that time? how do I keep in touch with current affairs? (By reading *The Independent*, obviously.)

In my two years of not watching the *Devil's Picture Box* I have visited places and seen things I never would have had the time to otherwise; yes, read more books; resumed the guitar; studied calligraphy; learnt to draw and to play Go; spent many happy hours reading and writing correspondence with friends in this and other countries; and many other things. There's no *Da Vinci* concert here: I don't do any of these things at all well: just at all.

Chickens may like television (actually, according to the researchers involved, they like watching screen savers - flying toasters a favourite), but other studies show that humans watching television eventually have their metabolisms depressed below the level of someone doing absolutely nothing at all. I don't see the advantage.

KEITH BRATHWAITE
London SE15

Body of work

I HOPE I can comment on a couple of points in Judith Palmer's supportive piece on *The South Bank Show's* forthcoming programme on "Body Art".

There is no "unscreened documentary" on the miners' strike made by Ken Loach. The programme I commissioned and edited was put out on Channel 4.

"Body Art" did not cause LWT executives "a headless panic", it raised valid complex issues which needed time to address.

I cannot imagine that Judith Palmer has been watching *The South Bank Show* if she thinks it is characterised by Elaine Page, The Bee Gees and Michael Flatley. Some of our recent programmes have featured the artists Gillian Wearing and Gary Hume, John Adams, Saul Zaentz, Beryl Bainbridge and Nigel Kennedy - this since Christmas.

I think that Dan Wiles' use of the word "obscure" for the excellent programme on Seamus Heaney may have been a touch ironic.

MELVYN BRAGG
The South Bank Show
London Weekend Television
London SE1

Disraeli's loss

DISRAELI may well be back in fashion ("How the Tories could outflank Labour", 31 March) but Donald Macintyre has confused his history. Yes, Disraeli encouraged Derby to pass the Second Reform Act in 1867 but they did not win the next election. Much to Disraeli's irritation Gladstone triumphed in 1868 with a majority of about 110, as against 70 in 1865. Disraeli had to wait for his triumph until 1874.

PATRICK DERHAM
Solihull, West Midlands

Bearded revolutionaries

YOUR LEADING article (3 April) is quite right to argue that laser technology will not get rid of people's desire to have beards. You are quite wrong to suggest that this is simply a matter of fashion.

There is a fierce battle of class and politics going in this country between clean-shaven revisionists such as Tony Blair and Peter Mandelson, who are continuing their contest as to who can appear the most clean-shaven and those with beards, such as Frank Dobson and Jeremy Corbyn, who stand by the hirsute socialism of Keir Hardie, Marx and Engels.

KEITH FLETT
General Secretary
Beard Liberation Front
London N17

LETTER from THE EDITOR

THIS newspaper is often asked to back causes and sponsor events. Most of the time we are under no illusion: we are wanted because our name can lend lustre to a pretty dismal occasion. We were delighted, though, to lend our support to two events in the past few days: the alternative Asia-Europe summit of human rights organisations designed to embarrass the gathering of Asian and European leaders in London; and Student Choices, the conference on higher education and the crisis facing students and institutions as they grapple with the fee system.

Together they summed up *The Independent* at its best: irreverent; pointed; challenging; sending up self-importance and highlighting those issues that really matter, such as freedom of expression and access to education.

In the case of the alternative summit, while the leaders posed for pictures and were wine and dined by Tony Blair, we were backing the democracy movements in their countries. At the education conference, I stressed our commitment to higher education - witness our exclusive coverage of the annual UCAS listings of still vacant places on courses. I also listened as Baroness Blackstone, the education minister, gave the keynote address. Despite record numbers entering higher education, said the minister, "not all young people have the same choice. Although 54 per cent of young people from professional backgrounds and managerial homes go on to higher education, only

17 per cent of those from semi-skilled and unskilled backgrounds do so. We cannot tolerate such disparity."

Of course, but as I listened to her, I could not help thinking that the Government has a lot to answer for. Lady Blackstone said her department was monitoring the fall in applications from mature students, which she attributed to an improving labour market, a decline in people without qualifications and a rise in part-time courses which are not included in UCAS figures. I am not so sure: applications from mature students are down a massive quarter on last year. Surely, tuition fees are mainly to blame?

ON Tuesday evening, as I journeyed home, I allowed myself a satisfied smile. The following day's paper was full of excellent things: Jeremy Laurance exposing the tobacco companies as having conned smokers with claims about the safety of "low tar" cigarettes; more on Bill Clinton's alleged affairs and Alastair Campbell's discomfort over his boss's cosy relationship with Rupert Murdoch; a great read on the tragic life of Karl Marx's daughter Eleanor and a new column confronting issues affecting the ethnic minorities from Randeep Ramesh. Pats on the back all round.

On Wednesday morning, I came in to find we had more readers' complaints than I have ever experienced. Letters, e-mails, phone calls - they made their anger plain. Our sin?

We had repeated Tuesday's cryptic crossword in Wednesday's paper. An error easily made in these days of hi-tech production - but an error nevertheless. We tried to placate callers by faxing them the puzzle they missed and promising to run two crosswords in Thursday's paper, but for some this was not good enough. One caller was hysterical - to a degree that made me realise we really had deprived him of a daily friend or fix. The next time I leave the office content with our lot, I will make one last check on the crossword. I promise.

WHAT we could have said, but didn't, when people rang to complain about the lack of new clues for one down and two across was "April Fool". We played two jokes on readers this year: we "revealed" that a Cabinet committee was proposing replacing hereditary peers with ordinary people; chosen at random, like jury service; and we "disclosed" the latest innovation to hit rugby, a ball that flashes when kicked through the uprights. I felt a twinge of guilt in case readers fell for them and made sure we had done enough to indicate they were a spoof. When the night desk said reporters from *The Times* and *Daily Mail* had been on, saying they had been asked to follow up our very good story about the House of Lords my heart leapt. Got 'em!

ROSIE BOYCOTT



Take a look inside – that's where the wild things really are



DAVID
AARONOVITCH
THE ORIGINS
OF THE MONSTERS

WE HAVE spoken about cryptozoology before, you and I. The word was coined by a Dr Bernard Heuvelmans in the 1950s to describe his own rather peculiar interests. Dr Heuvelmans combined the Greek word, "kryptos" or hidden, with "zoology" to give us the study of unknown or fantastic beasts.

Naturally, cryptozoology has come to have its moderate and its extreme wings. The moderates content themselves with identifying previously obscure species of nematodes in unpleasant caverns in the Carpathians. The extremists are better known to us from popular television programmes, where they talk about unicorns, yetis, beasts of Bodmin, the Loch Ness monster, extinct dragons, Bigfoots and a hundred other fabulous animals.

This is a dumb column, written by a dumbed-down author for jaded Saturday palates; so let us forget about the bloody nematodes. If it's nematodes you're after, try the *New Scientist*. No, we will concentrate instead on the exotic, ray end of the market, where the wild things are. For, tomorrow, the National History Museum opens an exhibition dealing with things like the Cyclops and the Abominable Snowman. And it seeks to answer the question, why do tales of such extraordinary manifestations persist so obstinately?

The first explanation, preferred by nutters and television producers with prime time slots to fill, is that the rumours carry on because they're true. There really is a beast of Bodmin, and here's the photo of it on a dry-stone wall; there really are yetis in the Himalayas – a guy called Messner saw one recently and it was almost 200cm tall, orange-furred, nocturnal, ate yaks and communicated with fellow yetis by whistling ("Oh Danny Boy?"); the forests of Oregon really are home to the Sasquatch, and here's a picture of a female one that looks just like a guy in a gorilla suit, but isn't. Folk like this read

reports from Moscow on the latest proceedings of The International Conference on the Relict Hominoid. Such credulity is out for the sophisticated, who know that the famous fairies photos were faked. So some prefer the theory that many of these animals are inherited memories, inhabiting our sub-conscious minds. Once we and they did walk the earth together, just as our Cro-Magnon ancestors shared forests and caves with Neanderthals. Giant apes and tree sloths, long extinct, may have left an impression on Ug and Glug that has been branded into the genes of a thousand generations.

I do not myself believe it. It is a matter of fact, and not conjecture, that – in the Ice Age – man hunted the mammoth. Hell, we practically factory farmed the furry things. So how come we do not find ourselves siding up to the smooth elephants at the zoo and whispering "Wotcha baldy!" in their hairless ears? I am prepared to believe that we are programmed to move our hips in intercourse, but not that we are equally programmed to believe in unicorns.

So, let's look at option three, which is also for the more scientifically minded. That these wonderful animals are rationalisations of other things – misunderstandings, if you like. Take the Cyclops, the one-eyed giant encountered by Odysseus on his somewhat hectic voyage home from the Trojan war. Now, there are islands en route between Ithaca and Ithaca where palaeontologists have discovered fossils of extinct pygmy elephants. These have one big hole in the skull where the trunk went. So, as Dr Angela Milner, a dinosaur expert put it, "The ancient Greeks would never have seen elephants, so it was a natural association to assume that the skull belonged to a giant one-eyed man." Likewise dragons could be explained by travellers who heard reports of giant lizards in the far east, or who saw some of the old dinosaur fossils in China.

You see how easily all this can be explained? It's like the Bible with its floods and Red Sea partings, or the drowning of the lost island of Atlantis. Ancient earthquakes in the Middle East, a volcanic eruption on the island of Santorini that destroyed the Minoan civilisation of Crete – it's not that the stories aren't true, exactly; quite the contrary, something did indeed happen to start the tales off. Or, as Dr Milner went on to say about past cryptozoological phenomena, scientists have "found scientific explanations for most of the monsters that exist in legend, and in many cases there is a logical explanation."

But, if you will permit me, I would like to canvass support for my own explanation – the fourth theory, if you like. It is quite a simple postulation compared with the hidden memory and rationalised event theories. And it is this. We made the whole lot up. Everything. All of it. Storytellers who knew how the dark frightens us, how the large awes us, how sharp teeth threaten us, how the uncivilised cannot be reconciled by our peaceful words and gestures, these storytellers constructed tales out of their own heads which deployed these elements and combined them. From the slitheriness of snakes, the slyness of wolves, the strength of giants, we fashioned Cerberus, the Hydra, the Cyclops, the yeti and the dragon. It all comes from within, constructed by that genuinely fabulous, epiphenomenal, exceptional, infinitely complex and wonderful thing – our imagination.

To adapt a phrase, you certainly could (and you do) make it up.

Don't tell me about re-branding Britain, you'll never get it anyway



SUZANNE
MOORE

THE DEATH OF THE COOL

YOU could say that I am just put out because no one has asked me to be on Panel 2000, the gathering of 33 famous faces brought together to aid New Labour in presenting a "positive contemporary identity" to the rest of the world. But you would be wrong. I want no part of any welfare to work scheme even if it is one for creative celebrity types. I have to admit anyway that I lack the basic qualification. I have no idea really what the cool in Cool Britannia means. But perhaps I could be some consultant of anti-cool because I sure as hell recognise what it is not. The re-branding of Britain involving New Labour, the Spice Girls, dress designers and lots of gadgets does not appear cool in any sense.

Each man kills the thing he loves – someone quite cool said that I believe – and so it is the way of the world that even intelligent politicians inevitably struggle at birth any idea that doesn't fit neatly into pre-conceived political categories. The notion of Cool Britannia floated a couple of years ago referred to a vague, transient, incoherent and organic phenomenon that was primarily cultural. Our artists, our musicians, our designers were producing an image of Britain through their work that seemed fresh. Though it referenced the past it felt modern and self-confident.

To try and harness such amorphous forces to promote anything other than themselves was always a bad idea. The intricate and complex relationship between culture and politics is hard to fathom. There is only one thing that you can be definite about: cultural change proceeds political change, therefore the spectacle of politicians trying to use these cultural undercurrents to shore up their own credibility is always bound to fail. There are those paid to read the changes, those paid to create the changes and those paid to manage them. All these groups have entirely different agendas, different motivations and live in entirely different worlds.



Tony Blair seeks, and fails, to gain credibility by hob-nobbing with Meg and Noel Gallagher

Blair Inc. mistook a youthful anti-Thatcher sentiment as an embrace when it was little more than a shrug. It all reminds me of an item, *The Art and Dec Show*, a youth programme, in which every week some embarrassing Blair would be brought on stage. His crime was inevitably dancing during *Top of the Pops*, telling jokes to his teenage children or doing appalling impressions. The Dad would perform while his offspring would sit cringing in

was Ian Brown, former Stone Rose. The boy looks good and the boy has done good, but do we really want to know his views on homosexuality? "Violence comes from Romans, Nazis, Greeks. They were all homosexual and I've got gay friends that will back me up". Back you up? If you're right, Ian, surely they will beat you up. Just as Ian Brown should do what he is good at, so the Government should stick to what it is good at – being the boring, estab-

For all its concern about image, this government should really get its own house in order. A truly cool government would not let Harriet Harman blather on about "hand-outs". It would realise that its stance on tuition fees, on drugs, on "scrumpers" is fundamentally opposed to the interests of many of the constituencies it is trying to attract. No amount of image-making will change the fact that the policy and the image do not go together.

Anyone who tries as hard as this government to be cool is obviously not going to be. I don't want Blair to be cool, I just want him to be good at his job

the audience. At the end of the whole audience would shout in unison "Your Dad is Sad".

Anyone who tries as hard as this government to be cool is obviously not going to be. If we wanted a weird, skewed, icon of cool to be Prime Minister we would have had Jarvis Cocker but instead we have got someone bland, mainstream, surgically normal. That doesn't matter. I don't want Blair to be cool. I just want him to be good at his job. Why should he and people like Robin Cook force themselves to utter this drivel. They get it wrong, just like pop stars talking about anything other than how difficult it is to get out the second album when half the band are out of their heads. A prime example this week

ishment figures that they are. You can't have it all ways.

If we are worried that our international reputation is at stake, then get some of these old diplomats back to Britain for a week and give them a guided tour. Or replace them. Panel 2000, which sounds like something you would buy at B & Q, cannot forge a future for Britain, however good and noble its members – the reason being that no one including the Prime Minister seems to know what they are talking about exactly. Last week when Blair was asked again what was going in the Dome he said, "We are forging a new patriotism focused on the potential we can fulfil in the future." Oh, so that's cleared that up then.

It is not surprising that the formerly supportive pop press renounced Blair a few weeks back. Those who lent their credibility to Blair are now back-tracking as fast as they can. Who now looks cool? Noel Gallagher for hob-nobbing with the PM or Damon Albarn for refusing to be drawn in to the whole circus in the first place? Of course it makes sense for business people to sell the image of modern Britain to the rest of the world; they had been do-

ing it already. But a government, any government, cannot incorporate anti-establishment leanings into its own narrow agenda. Much of the creativity of our best artists and musicians springs from a spontaneous need to express their own view of the world, not someone else's. Just a glance at some of the subject matters that some of our young geniuses are dealing with – death, decay, class, racism, and drugs – would surely indicate that they are hardly going to conform to some New Shiny Clean Labour aspirations.

One may re-brand a product; but if that product has changed and diversified, it cannot be re-branded into a single, neat package. We are, as Blair says, a mixture of old and new. Our confusion is symbolised for me by Bernie, the new virtual presenter of the Lottery show. She is a little bit Cilla, little bit Anthea, a little bit Pamela Anderson, a little bit Cyberbabe. The point is that she is not real but a ridiculous attempt to unify an incredibly diverse number of demands.

Those who originally created the impetus that came to be defined as Cool Britannia never ever believed that Britannia rules the waves. They only ever got to be cool because they knew that Britannia waves the rules. Someone, somewhere must be cool enough to explain this to our rulers?

Martin Luther King's death is still a warning



TREVOR
PHILLIPS
PERSISTENCE
OF RACISM

FORGIVE me if it seems ill-mannered to write about "the black thing" two Saturdays running, but there are reasons. First because today is the 30th anniversary of an event that made a deeper mark on my attitudes to public life than any other, before or since: the assassination of Dr Martin Luther King. I was fortunate to be able to grow up with the example of a moral and personal giant before me. Because of his and my race, I felt a little closer to him than many, but I imagine that King was available to anyone as a role model whatever their race. Today we think of him as a star performer: a magnificent orator, a messianic preacher, a blaze of ebullience.

He belongs to a generation of legends who we now see only through the distorting bubble of television archives. In spite of efforts to "reassess" all of them – King, Kennedy, Muhammad Ali, De Gaulle, even poor deposed Khrushchev – the heroes of that period still carry a mythic weight and oolality out of sight since. Can we imagine Bill Clinton making the words "Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country" carry the tingle that Kennedy's inaugural speech still provokes?

The nearest we come today is the saintly Nelson Mandela. He remains, in some senses, a figure of the 1960s anyway; his electrifying condemnation of apartheid in the Rivonia trial of 1963 still defines him, and archive film from the early Sixties, shown again and again, fixes him in our memory. In King's case, his speech at the Lincoln monument – "Let Freedom Ring" – remains his defining moment.

There is no reason to suppose that King was inherently more charismatic than Jesse Jackson, or Kennedy, less morally compromised than Bill Clinton. But we don't think of them in that way. All these heroes were made famous by the box, at a time when TV journalism was not yet inclined to peek under the skirts of saints.

The fact that for the first time we could see these great leaders frequently, close-up, and in the midst of crisis, separated them from the previous generation of rather remote figures. Churchill, who might have had the same impact, was only available on wireless in his great moment. The heroes of the Sixties seemed vital, and their actions immediate. For about ten years, a window existed before TV journalists, shaken and disillusioned by Vietnam and Watergate routinely adopted the tones of cynicism and accusation so familiar today.

But for King, this was not a film role. It was grim reality, and most people still fail to grasp the depth of his courage. King probably never had any doubt that he would die a premature death; and at just thirty-five, he was racing against time to accomplish as much as he could before the end came. His murder, on the balcony of the Lorraine Motel in Memphis, came less than five years after the shooting of John F. Kennedy, and just two months before the assassination of Bobby Kennedy who, as Attorney General, had been vital in delivering King's civil rights legislation. That last killing was a watershed for black families all over the world.

Our parents said firmly to us: "You see? Any time that

anybody does the slightest thing for black people, they'll kill him." Bobby Kennedy's assassination even inspired a lachrymose hit song called "Abraham (Lincoln), Martin and John", which people actually played at parties. The chorus went: *Has anybody here seen my old friend Martin? Can you tell me where he's gone? He freed a lot of people,*

After Bobby Kennedy's assassination, our parents said to us: "You see? Any time that anybody does the slightest thing for black people, they'll kill him."

But it seems the good, they die young. I just looked around and he was gone.

Today, it is hard for anyone not part of this generation to grasp just how real the risk seemed. Members of the Black Panthers were being shot right left and centre; even here, people you knew were quietly spirited away, or as in the case of the most prominent black radical of 1960s Britain, Michael X, discredited and destroyed. Their deaths may well have been in part due to their own

shortcomings, but the result of any kind of successful political action by a black person has always seemed to be peculiarly predictable. So for my generation of black activists, merely going on a demonstration felt as though it carried the seeds of personal destruction.

In this context it is not difficult to understand the decision of General Colin Powell not to offer himself as a candidate for

the Presidency of the United States. His family clearly believed that even if he had won at the polls he would never have reached the swearing-in ceremony. The King family, and King's principal political protégée, former Atlanta Mayor Andrew Young still suspect that there was a cover-up over his killing.

The certainty that politics is bad for black health persists. Even now, the decision of a young member of my own family to enter public life in the US requires careful consideration

and lengthy transatlantic conferences about the chance of harm coming to him or her. It is perhaps a mark of the courage of the older generation of black people that they still encourage such activism in spite of their own belief that it will inevitably end up in catastrophe.

Of course none of the things that happened to King and the Kennedys could happen here, could they? Um, perhaps anybody who believes that should spend a few moments studying the reports of the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry. There are people in our society who treat a black life as casually as they would that of a passing insect.

My own crop of racist hate-mail this week was especially inspired. The Nazis are going *communautaire*. Part of one letter came in French, with a handwritten note in English telling me that "we" will never go away "now we are being funded by our successful French comrades". I won't recount the rest of it, as even *The Independent* can be read by children. However, if my beetle-brained correspondent can get someone to read this column to him or her, I would like him or her to borrow a brain cell and think about the following puzzle: why is an avowedly anti-European organisation using French money to promote its vile cause?

Glasgow
from

to **£69***
return inc. taxes

Prague
from

to **£198***
return inc. taxes

All we cut is
the price.

Return fare from London Heathrow
For those and more, visit us at www.bmid.co.uk
contact your travel agent or call us on 0845 6071637

British Midland
The Airline for Europe

* quoted available on selected dates and flights. Subject to availability. Travel must include a Saturday night. Flight prices include UK and foreign taxes. Excludes excess baggage. 14 days advance booking required. All advertised prices based on 10kg baggage allowance. Baggage allowance subject to the UK and foreign regulations.

Japan's debt downgraded as yen dives

By Richard Lloyd Parry in Tokyo and Diane Coyle in London

JAPAN'S struggling economy suffered another severe blow yesterday after the Moody's credit rating agency downgraded its assessment of its sovereign debt, provoking a further drop in share prices and driving the yen to its lowest level in six and a half years.

Yet as Japan reeled from the latest bad news, with share, bond and currency markets all tumbling, stock markets in New York and London made fresh gains. The Dow Jones index broke through the 9,000 barrier for the first time in early trading.

Moody's Investor Service revised its outlook for Japanese government bonds from "stable" to "negative", a step which could eventually lead to a downgrade of the government's overall credit rating.

"The change reflects uncertainty about the ability of the authorities to achieve a policy consensus that would help promote a return to economic growth and fiscal balance," the agency said in a statement from its New York headquarters. Another rating agency, Fitch IBCA, later said it was reviewing its ratings of Japanese banks and expected further downgrades.

The announcement – a day after the head of Sony said the economy was on the verge of collapse – nudged the already anxious currency and stock markets into a further round of selling which left the yen at its weakest level against the dollar since April 1992. It recovered slightly from a low of ¥135.20 to the dollar after apparent intervention by the Bank of Japan, and hints by the finance minister, Hideo Matsuura, that the government would act to stabilise the currency.

The news drove the Nikkei share price index down to 15,517.78, a fall of 185 points or 1.18 per cent, following an early surge.

The message from Asian and European leaders gathered in London for the Asem summit was that there was no need to panic. Ryutaro Hashimoto, Japan's prime minister, admitted: "Various concerns from abroad have been voiced regarding the state of the Japanese economy."

He told the meeting that Japan would take the necessary measures for economic recovery, though he provided no more details of a ¥16 trillion (£7.2bn) stimulus

package announced earlier in the month, which has so far failed to restore confidence. "The fundamental strength of the Asian economy runs deep. The current difficulties will be overcome," he said yesterday.

Tony Blair, hosting the conference, said the crisis had been "the most serious shock to the world economy for some decades". Today's communiqué will say the difficulties are not yet over and the need for vigilance remains.

Asia will remain high on the agenda for the meeting of G8 finance ministers and central bankers in Washington later this month, and at next month's summit of G8 leaders in Birmingham.

In contrast to the gloom in Tokyo, on Wall Street, the Dow Jones index jumped through 9,000, having gained 1,000 points 12.5 per cent in past two months.

The Treasury bond market also soared, gaining a point and a half after news of an unexpected drop of 36,000 in employment last month. This was the first fall for more than two years and followed a recently monthly average increase of 345,000.

Even though economists said the drop was a statistical aberration, and average hourly earnings rose by four cents last month to \$12.63, the financial markets concluded that the US was safe from any threat of higher interest rates.

Shares in London also rose, the FTSE 100 index ending 11 points higher at 6,064.2. So far the US and European economies and stock markets have been little affected by the Asian crisis, although the risk of a spillover cannot yet be ruled out.

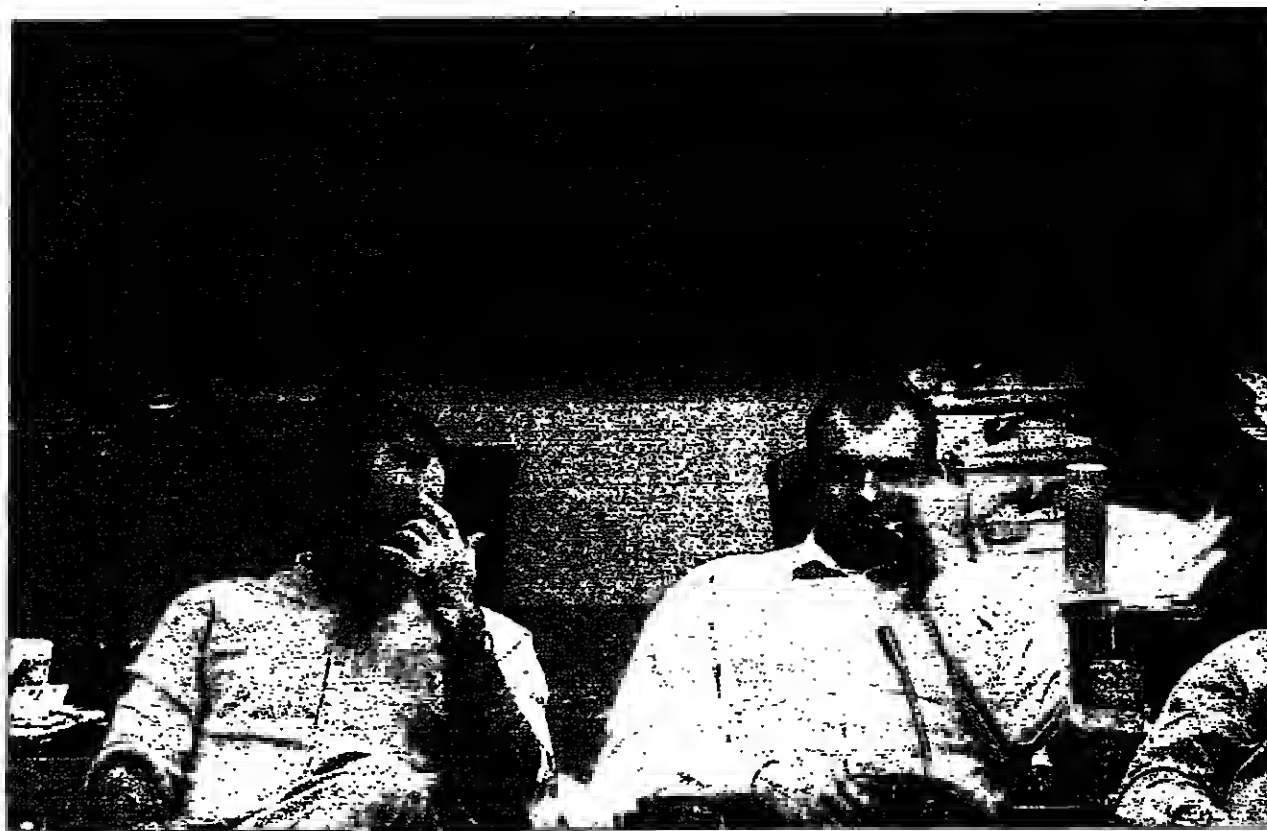
Keith Edmonds, an analyst at IBU in London, said it was surprising that New York and London were ignoring the impact of the Asian crisis on prospective corporate earnings. "Liquidity-driven bubbles like these have always burst in the past," he warned.

The Moody's statement surprised analysts. Some regarded it as an over-reaction but most were equally negative.

Michael Hughes, a director of Barings Asset Management, said: "It will take a full economic cycle to get Japan back on the road."

Peter Chambers at HSBC Securities said: "Japan is heading for depression. A massive change of culture is needed."

Michael Harrison, page 25



Numbers game: Currency dealers in Tokyo react as the dollar soars to a six-year high against the yen Photograph AP

UK services still booming

By Diane Coyle
Economics Editor

PROSPECTS for interest rates in the UK were no clearer after fresh evidence yesterday that the service sector of the economy expanded vigorously in March. In the latest survey, businesses reported a pick-up in new business, a growing backlog of work, shortages of skilled and unskilled staff and higher wages.

With this confirmation of a dual economy – booming services and limping manufacturing – the Bank of England's Monetary Policy Committee still faces a tough dilemma when it meets next week. Official figures

for industrial output due on Monday are expected to confirm this pattern.

City experts expect the decision on Thursday to hinge, once again, on the vote of Eddie George. The minutes of February's meeting, the latest published, showed the Governor's casting vote to have been decisive in keeping rates unchanged at 7.25 per cent.

Yesterday's survey of services by the Chartered Institute of Purchasing and Supply showed buoyant activity, with the index at 60.3, a fraction lower than February but well above the 50 "boom-bust" watershed.

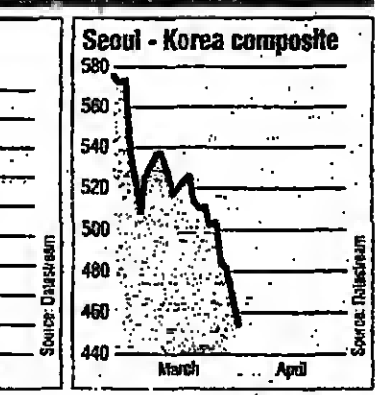
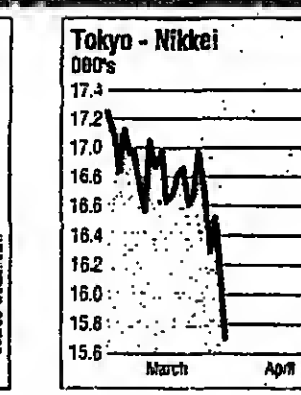
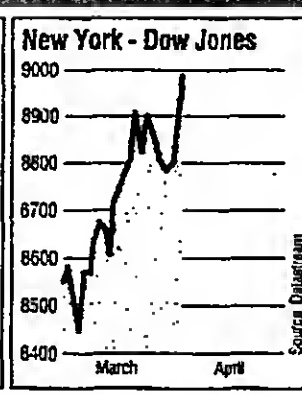
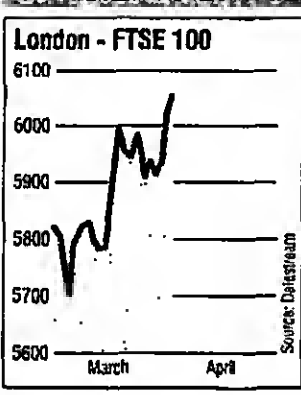
New business and the backlog of work increased, at a slightly slower pace than the previous month, while employment and

prices rose at a faster rate. A third of all firms said they had more new business, and blamed their inability to meet current demand on staff shortages.

Respondents said they had to offer higher pay to attract new staff and retain existing staff, with the result that costs rose sharply for the 21st month running. The one negative note came from a sharp fall in optimism about future prospects.

Kevin Darlington, an economist at ABN Amro, said: "This survey is unlikely to tip the balance at next week's MPC meeting, but it heralds firmer GDP growth in the first quarter or higher underlying pay growth, we might only have to wait until May for the next rate rise."

The global economy in two halves – shares west and east



Volkswagen tops BMW with £380m Rolls offer

By Kerry Benefield

THE WAR between two German car giants for the most illustrious name in British motoring heated up yesterday after Volkswagen trumped BMW with an offer for Rolls-Royce valuing the business at £360m-£380m.

Vickers, Rolls' parent company, confirmed it had received a new offer from Volkswagen but said it was unable to discuss the details because it remained locked in four weeks of exclusive negotiations with BMW, which has until the end of April to seal the terms of the deal.

BMW was thought to have secured Rolls on Monday after submitting an offer of £340m. VW's initial offer was worth just over £300m and was hemmed in with conditions that would have allowed it to reduce the price if BMW withdrew its

contract to supply engines for the new Silver Seraph model.

The prospect of a bidding war helped Vickers' shares motor ahead 6.5p to 237p yesterday as the market braced itself for a battle to the bitter end between two rival German companies.

Vickers sources said that, in total, the BMW bid valued Rolls-Royce Motors at about £400m since BMW is not buying either its specialist engines and pressings businesses, said to be worth £40m in total, and will also repay working capital put into Rolls since the start of the year, which is likely to be about £20m.

BMW has also pledged to invest a further £1bn in the company over the next 10 years.

BMW's production of engines for Rolls-Royce, and its close ties with Rolls-Royce plc, the aero-engine company that owns the Rolls-Royce name, is

still reckoned to give it the edge in the bid battle with VW. However, VW believes that Rolls' engine contract with BMW will oblige it to maintain supplies long enough for a new source of engines to be found.

Rolls-Royce plc has made it clear that it is in favour of the BMW deal, and could attempt to remove the Rolls-Royce name from the cars if VW emerges victorious.

Vickers says its legal advice is that the ownership clause is invalid and that if Rolls-Royce plc attempted to enforce it, the company would be in breach of European competition laws.

The clause was put in place when the Rolls-Royce business was split in two in the early 1970s and the aero-engine division was taken into state ownership. It was designed to allow Rolls-Royce plc to veto the sale of Rolls-Royce Motors to a foreign bidder if it thought the buyer was inappropriate.

Brewers to close sites and cut jobs

By Nigel Cope
City Correspondent

THREE brewers took further steps to counter the over-supply in Britain's beer market yesterday when they announced plans to close or sell three breweries with the loss of more than 200 jobs.

Whitbread confirmed plans to close two breweries in Cheltenham and Castle Eden, County Durham at the beginning of October if no buyer can be found. The two sites employ

111 workers between them.

Morland, the Old Speckled Hen brewer which bought the Riddles brand from Grolsch last year, is closing its Lancham brewery near Oakham, Rutland later this year, affecting 38 jobs. It plans to shift production of Riddles to its Abingdon brewery, in which it is investing £1.5m.

Separately Newcastle Breweries, part of Scottish & Newcastle, has announced 71 job cuts at a plant in Newcastle. The company blamed the redundancies on the rising popularity

of lager, which is affecting sales of Newcastle Brown Ale.

Morland's decision provoked a stinging attack from Camra, the real ale campaign group. Mike Benner, the group's head of campaigns, said: "Morland has betrayed Britain's beer drinkers. Brewing Riddles outside its Rutland homeland will ruin the beer. A different team of brewers and different ingredients will see to that."

Camra has called for an urgent meeting with Morland's management and is inviting

beer drinkers to write and complain to the company.

Morland's decision to close the Lancham brewery, which it acquired as part of the Riddles deal last September, was not a surprise. It had mainly been interested in the beer brands rather than the production facilities.

Whitbread's plans to close two of its five breweries had also been widely expected. The Cheltenham site brews Flowers cask ale while the Castle Eden plant produces Castle Eden ale and Trophy Bitter.

Miles Templeman, managing director of the Whitbread Brewing Company, said that although the group had recently achieved its highest ever market share it was operating in a highly competitive and changing market.

"These changes will help us achieve leading standards of cost-efficiency and productivity whilst providing an even more effective service to our customers," he said. The brands brewed at Castle Eden and Cheltenham will be transferred to other Whitbread breweries.

Bank linked to Nazis seeks to improve its image

By Lea Paterson

UBS and SBC, the merging Swiss banks, have hired a corporate identity consultant to improve their tarnished images.

"It's certainly a challenge," said Kaspar Loeb, a member of the management committee of Interbrand Zintzmeyer & Lux,

the Zurich branch of the Interbrand image consultancy.

Both UBS and SBC have received substantial amounts of negative press coverage following confirmation of their merger plans back in December.

There have been hundreds of lay-offs at the investment banking arms of the two banks, ques-

tions surrounding the banks' links with Nazi Germany and hundreds of millions of pounds in trading losses at UBS.

Further bad press is likely in the coming months as the two banks begin to rationalise their branches in Switzerland.

Mr Loeb admitted the investment banking lay-offs had

tarnished the SBC and UBS brands, although he added that the damage was mostly confined to the UK. "In Switzerland, the two banks are seen as trustworthy," he said.

According to Mr Loeb, UBS is commonly perceived as being the more "rigid" of the two banks, partially because of its

handling of questions surrounding its links with Nazi Germany and dormant accounts of Holocaust victims.

Interbrand's first task would be to help determine the positioning of the new UBS brand. Mr Loeb said. Earlier this year, UBS brought in Bell Pottinger Financial, the PR agency.

STOCK MARKETS

Index	Close	Change	Change (%)	52 wk high	52 wk low	Yield (%)
FTSE 100	6064.20	11.40	0.19	6105.80	5207.50	3.34
FTSE 250	5557.80	12.80	0.23	5548.00	4384.20	2.98
FTSE 350	2507.00	5.70	0.20	2517.00	2079.10	3.27
FTSE All Share	2832.37	5.39	0.19	2830.77	2086.07	3.25
FTSE SmallCap	2540.10	2.80	0.11	2538.50	2182.10	2.89
FTSE 100 Div	1411.20	0.40	0.03	1415.30	1225.20	3.22
FTSE AIM	1068.80	5.20	0.49	1055.70	955.80	1.05
Dow Jones	9001.84	16.20	0.18	8997.11	8358.78	1.56
Nikkei	15517.78	-185.12	-1.18	20910.79	14488.21	1.04
Hong Kong	11092.88	-137.05	-1.23	11890.31	7959.19	0.65
Dax	5223.52	-48.06	-0.91	5197.57	3192.33	1.55

INTEREST RATES

Short sterling	UK 10 year gilt	US long bond
3 month 1 yr 5 yr	10 year 15 year	10 year 30 year
UK 7.61 1.18 7.62 0.62 5.77 -1.54 5.69 -2.13	US 5.89 -0.13 5.81 -0.53 5.34 -1.41 5.77 -1.30	Japan 0.67 0.10 0.68 -0.01 1.94 -0.42 2.55 -0.41
Germany 3.62 0.37 3.69 0.48 4.64 -1.20 5.40 -1.43		

CURRENCIES

\$/£	DM/£	¥/£
Dollar 1.6655 -0.70c 1.6390	DM 1.9375 -0.02c 1.9350	¥ 166.30 -0.40 166.70
Gold (\$)	306.25 4.20 348.75	RPI 160.30 3.40 155.00
Silver (\$)	6.73 0.28 4.86	Base Rates 7.25 6.00

TOURIST RATES

Australia (\$)	2.4421	Malaysia (ringgits)	5.9922
Austria (schillings)	20.01	Malta (lira)	0.6419
Belgium (francs)	61.79	Netherlands (guilder)	3.3716
Canada (\$)	2.3084	New Zealand (\$)	2.9085
Cyprus (pounds)	0.8669	Norway (krone)	12.46
Denmark (krone)	11.47	Portugal (escudos)	304.69
Finland (markka)	9.1482	Saudi Arabia (rials)	6.0709
France (francs)	10.03	Singapore (\$)	2.5852
Germany (marks)	3.0066	Spain (pesetas)	253.47
Greece (drachmas)	516.49	South Africa (rand)	8.0218
Hong Kong (\$)	12.51	Sweden (krone)	13.06
Ireland (pounds)	1.1847	Switzerland (francs)	2.4803
Israel (shekels)	5.5349	Thailand (bahts)	61.64
Italy (lira)	2.964	Turkey (liras)	391.116
Japan (yen)	221.47	USA (\$)	1.6277

Rates for information purposes only
Source: Thomas Cook





MICHAEL HARRISON ON A JAPANESE COLLAPSE AND THE WEST'S SEARCH FOR A NEW ECONOMIC STAR IN ASIA

Don't bank on China for the next miracle

IT IS HARD not to feel a twinge of satisfaction at the turn of events in Japan and elsewhere across Asia. Two years ago, when the first Asem Asia-Europe meeting took place in Bangkok, there was a distinct swagger in the step of the Asian leaders. Their tiger economies were the envy of the world and Europe was scrambling for a share of the miracle, egged on over here by pundits and politicians alike (Tony Blair in particular).

Now the boot is on the other foot. The 10 Asian leaders who have assembled in London this weekend for Asem 2 now find themselves cast in the role of supplicants. They complain that Europe has not stumped up its fair share of funds to bail out the likes of Thailand, South Korea and Indonesia.

They want a partnership with the European Union to foster trade and investment. But what they also want is our money, channelled through the International Monetary Fund, to put right their battered economies which, we now know, were built on sound money but cronyism, corruption and crass lending.

Until very recently, it looked as if Japan would withstand the devastating combination of recession and deflation which has sent South East Asia into such a tailspin, even though the area is Japan's single biggest market.

Now no one is quite sure. The president of Sony, Norio Ogha, says Japan is on the verge of economic collapse and compares Prime Minister Hashimoto to Herbert Hoover, who led America into the Great Depression of 1929. Mr Ogha wants the Japanese government to reflate the economy and stimulate domestic demand (Sony finds it hard to shift Walkmans when everyone is keeping their money under the bed).

Mr Ogha's comments, given to the foreign press corps, were undoubtedly intended more for consumption in the West. If the plan was to pile the pressure on Mr Hashimoto just as his American and European counterparts are also calling for a big Japanese fiscal boost, then it could not have worked better.

But there is worse to come. Moody's, acutely aware of the failure of credit rating agencies to forecast the Asian slump, has changed its outlook on Japan from stable to negative. This is a neat way of making Japan pay more for its borrowings without actually downgrading its sovereign debt.

Meanwhile the Tokyo stock market continues to slide, which is perhaps more ominous. In the last week the Nikkei has shed another 7 per cent of its value, putting more pressure on the beleaguered banking sector which has a

large proportion of its capital tied up in equities. How long before we enter the danger zone where the banks can no longer maintain their capital ratios and are forced to cease trading or seek a government rescue?

With many of the tiger economies flat on their backs and the US determined not to allow its trade deficit with Japan to grow further, an export-led recovery does not look on the cards.

Japan has implicitly accepted that its future economic success will depend on having the kind of open markets and deregulated financial services that Anglo-Saxon capitalism has pioneered. In a week when the FTSE 100 has breached the 6,000 mark and Wall Street has smashed through 9,000, it is hard to argue with the supremacy of the Western model.

That is why Japan launched its Big Bang this week, a process that could eventually see Tokyo opened up as a financial centre in the way that London was a decade ago. Since then the London market has doubled in value to \$2,000bn, surpassing Tokyo on the way down.

A similar Japanese renaissance is not impossible. But right now it looks unlikely. That is why Western leaders are subtly shifting their allegiances towards Peking in the event that China, not

Japan, becomes Asia's economic powerhouse in the 21st century.

Mr Blair has made the transfer from fan of Tiger to friend of China seamlessly, letting the new Chinese premier Zhu Rongji as a "fellow moderniser". Asked whether the Chinese leader was the sort of man Mr Blair could do business with, Mr Blair's official spokesman replied: "Mr Blair did business with Mr Zhu."

It is all rather alarming. China may be a vast potential market with 1.2bn potential customers and a growth rate that would have made even the Tigers roar before the onset of their present troubles.

But in vast swaths of the country, China remains a feudal economy with a physical infrastructure that is at best crude and, in many areas, non-existent. For all Mr Zhu's reforming zeal it is important to remember that China is still run by a totalitarian regime.

Furthermore, it remains bureaucratic and corrupt while its banking system is not that healthy. Moreover, the pace at which economic reform is being pursued may prove unsustainable.

The Chinese state, a vast bloated bureaucracy, is seeking to reduce its payroll by the equivalent of the entire working population of the United States. Stop for a second and think of the un-

stoppable tidal wave of social unrest that threatens to create.

The rush of Western companies seeking to get a foothold in China is extraordinary. Airbus wants to build computer jets with the Chinese. Rolls-Royce wants to design engines. BAA wants to run their airports and Zeneca is putting up a weed-killer plant. Everywhere you look, Western companies are looking for a slice of the action whether it be lubricants from Burmah Castrol, air fresheners from Reckitt and Coleman or condoms from London International.

Companies falling over themselves to do business with China could do worse than reflect on the experience of Richard Gosling, recounted in the columns of this paper on Tuesday. Mr Gosling lost millions of pounds in a venture with China's 14th largest state-owned corporation to build printed circuit boards in China. A High Court judgment against the corporation, CTIETCC was ignored and Mr Gosling got his money back only after obtaining an order to seize its assets in Hong Kong.

It is a salutary story which Western politicians as much as businessmen should contemplate before they embrace China as the next economic miracle, only to be sorely let down once again.

Argos offers £431m to beat bid

By Nigel Cope
City Correspondent

ARGOS, the catalogue retailer, unveiled the final part of its defence against Great Universal Stores' £1.6bn bid yesterday with plans to return £431m to shareholders if they turn down the GUS offer.

The cash return of 150p per share came as Argos unveiled an upbeat profit and dividend forecast for the first six months of this year. It also claimed the implied value of an ongoing share in Argos was 700p including the cash return, far higher than GUS' 570p offer.

As Argos shares dipped 2p to 646p, most analysts said they expected GUS to increase its bid next week with some saying the home shopping group may have to add up to £1 per share to its current offer.

An upbeat Stuart Rose, Argos' new chief executive, said: "I think our chances [of fighting off the bid] are extremely good. I feel bullish." Urging shareholders to reject the offer he added: "GUS has misjudged it. The offer woefully under-values the business."

Argos' institutional shareholders appeared supportive yesterday and most said the

new management team had raised the stakes significantly since the bid battle started. "They are making a reasonable show of their defence and I think GUS might have to pay up quite a bit more to get it," said one senior fund manager.

Lord Wolfson, GUS chairman, maintained the pressure with another attack: "It is extraordinary that, after a series of profits warnings, Argos believes it deserves a blue chip price earnings multiple similar to M&S, Kingfisher and Boots."

He said the profits forecast was "imaginary" and the calculation of an implied Argos share price "totally unrealistic".

Analysts at stockbroker NatWest Securities criticised Argos, saying it was returning too much cash to shareholders and that GUS might not need to raise its offer at all to win. "They have overdone the cash distribution placing the company in a perilous financial position. They have shot themselves in the foot. GUS may even say its 570p or that's it."

Argos admitted that returning £431m to shareholders would give the company debts of more than £300m and negative net assets. However, it said cash generation was strong and interest cover



Upbeat: Stuart Rose and Bob Stewart, Argos financial director

Andrew Burnham

would stand at 5.5 times. Under takeover rules, GUS has until next Thursday to make its final offer.

One analyst said: "If they walk away having bid 570p they really do look rather opportunistic. There is now a case for saying that GUS needs Argos more than Argos needs GUS, given the competitive

threat which Argos poses through the extension of home delivery and through its joint venture with Littlewoods."

Separately, Argos announced that it will close its two First Stop stores at a cost of £2m. These were a test of a lower priced warehouse style operation. The company also said that Peter Birch, the former

Abbey National chief executive, would succeed Sir Richard Lloyd as chairman in May. If the GUS bid were defeated.

Argos is forecasting first half profits of £35.9m, an increase of 27 per cent. The dividend will see a 15 per cent increase to 21.2p, it said.

GUS shares closed 6p higher at 760p.

Grabner faces court hearing

By Paul Routledge

UNITED News & Media has been cleared to take Stephen Grabner, its former executive, to court at the end of the month in an attempt to prevent him taking up his post as chief executive of British Digital Broadcasting, the pay-TV group.

The April 28 trial date, which was set by a judge at a private hearing yesterday, will stop Mr Grabner from starting work for his new employers for another three and a half weeks, casting a doubt over BDB's plans to launch a 15-channel service in the autumn.

United has issued a writ to keep Mr Grabner to the terms of his contract, which includes a 12-month notice period. It has also issued an injunction preventing Mr Grabner from starting work with his new employer until the issue is resolved. In response, Mr Grabner is understood to be claiming constructive dismissal by United.

Mr Grabner announced his departure from United at the end of January. When United and BDB failed to reach an agreement, he walked out of United last month. United immediately took out an injunction.

Beleaguered Costain cuts losses to £7.4m

COSTAIN, the beleaguered engineering and construction group, has made headway in cutting losses and turning round the company, which lost £400m in three years. The group managed to reduce its pre-tax losses to £7.4m in 1997, compared with £62.3m in 1996.

Turnover fell from £745m to £571m, due in large part to the disposal of the company's interest in coal mining. John Armit, Costain chief executive, said yesterday: "Trading so far this year has been held back by uncertainty created by the protracted suspension of the company's share listing." In addition, short-term prospects in South-east Asia had diminished, he said.

Brussels OK for Spillers deal

NESTLE'S £715m purchase of Dalgely's Spillers pet-food unit was approved by European Union regulators yesterday, clearing the way for Nestle to become Europe's number two pet-food maker. Dalgely, the pig breeding and agriculture company, said the sale of Spillers and other units would allow it to return £675m to shareholders, up from a planned £650m announced earlier, and said it would bring the payment forward to June from December.

Saatchi dismisses bid talk

SAATCHI & Saatchi yesterday said it wanted to stay independent amid speculation that the media and advertising company could soon be the target of a bid, perhaps from France's Havas Advertising. The company's shares have surged 10 per cent this week on speculation of a bid. Boh Seelert, chief executive, said: "Independence suits us." The shares fell 5.5p to 167p. The comments came as the company said 1997 pre-tax profits rose to £27.8m from £16.5m in 1996.

Guinness Mahon sold

THE BANK of Yokohama has agreed to sell Guinness Mahon, the UK banking group, to Investec of South Africa for £95m. The announcement follows last week's disclosure that the two parties were in exclusive sale talks. David Potter, Guinness Mahon's chief executive, is understood to have been offered a senior management position at the South African bank. Job cuts are likely at both Investec and Guinness Mahon, and both groups are expected to relocate to a single City office.

Freeport plans cash call

FREEPORT LEISURE, the developer of factory-outlet shopping villages, plans a one-for-one rights issue of 20.1 million new shares at 32.5p per share to raise about £63.3m. The proceeds of the cash call will be used to fund the development of three new sites for outlet shopping and leisure operations, and will fund the purchase of sites at Braintree, Essex, and Wakefield, Yorkshire. Freeport is also developing a shopping mall in Newcastle-under-Lyme in a joint venture.

COMPANY RESULTS

	Turnover £	Pre-tax £	EPS	Dividend
Cambridge Mineral (P)	1.87m (1.87m)	-134.1m (-61.91m) (-0.45p) (-1)		
Chemical Design (P)	1.87m (1.87m)	-0.580m (-0.165m) (-0.1p) (-1)		
Costain Group (P)	599.9m (596.6m)	-7.4m (-62.3m)	3.5p (-51.7p) (-1)	
EW Fuel (P)	13.68m (11.75m)	1.38m (1.69m)	4.19p (6.03p) 2.9p (2.0p)	
Martin Text (P)	122.0m (111.4m)	2.2m (1.25m)	4.5p (2.2p)	1.3p (-1)
Overseas Investment Holdings (P)	26.57m (20.31m)	3.60m (3.50m)	2.58p (2.55p)	0.4p (0.3p)
Rabco (P)	18.40m (18.88m)	-0.232m (-0.166m)	-0.13p (0.08p) nil (-1)	

(P) - Profit (L) - Loss

Virgin's £2bn West Coast line upgrade threatens rail war

By Randeep Ramesh
Transport Correspondent

A RAIL WAR between Great North Eastern Railways and Virgin Trains loomed yesterday after the rail regulator approved the £2bn West Coast Main Line upgrade.

Hidden in the small print of the deal negotiated with Railtrack by Virgin, controlled by Richard Branson, is a provision for a new Virgin service linking London and Edinburgh.

The plan would see Virgin, which by 2001 will have a train linking the two capitals with a journey time of 3 hours 30 minutes, competing head to head with GNER's east coast service which, at best, takes four hours.

Christopher Garnett, GNER's chief executive, described the move as Virgin "cherry picking". GNER has proved phenomenally successful, beating the revenue British Rail raked in by more than £30m since it took over in 1996, taking £310m.

"Glasgow [Virgin's current main station] is 40 per cent larger than Edinburgh and Virgin runs a 35 per cent worse train service from there than we do from Edinburgh," Mr Garnett said.

GNER points out that it cannot respond in kind and "attack" Virgin's market on the west coast. "It is part of the deal to get the west coast modernised that there would be no competition from people like us," said Mr Garnett.

The huge investment by Railtrack and Virgin will lead to the introduction of fast tilting trains.

Mr Garnett pointed out that the regulator, John Swift QC, had only published "draft conclusions" and he would be lobbying hard to see changes.

Virgin said it was unperturbed by GNER's plans. "No body else has presented a business plan to Railtrack for this type of project," said a spokesman.

Mr Swift said the plan had to be sensitive to the needs of the railway as a whole. "I want to see further improvements to services to Glasgow and Edinburgh and a significant improvement to services to North Wales," he added.

Nationwide faces disruption as three rebels run for election

By Andrew Verity

NATIONWIDE Building Society faces widespread disruption to its business after three rebel candidates yesterday entered the race for election to the society's board.

A mystery candidate became the third member to submit the 50 signatures needed to challenge the incumbent directors. Nationwide said it would not reveal the member's identity because the member had not sought publicity.

Two other candidates, Andrew Muir and Michael Hardern, are running for director despite having no experience in building societies or banks. The deadline for mem-

bers to submit nominations is today.

Mr Muir, a 32-year-old recruitment consultant from Slough, will today send the Nationwide a fresh resolution asking the society to highlight ways to reward account-holders. But he will stop short of demanding the society floats on the stock market.

Mr Muir, who runs a small recruitment consultancy called Accountancy Support, has withdrawn an earlier resolution which proposed a windfall of at least £500 each to members - without floating the company on the stock market.

"A third of members wanted conversion last year. A third is a big majority. Yes, it's not the whole majority, but you can't

just wipe them under the carpet," Mr Muir said.

Nationwide struck out Mr Muir's first resolution, saying it appeared to show he did not understand the way building societies worked. If Nationwide had 4.5 million eligible members who received £500 each, this would reduce the society's £2.2bn reserve to nothing, making business impossible. "Effectively suggesting we have no reserves is not a viable suggestion," said a spokesman for Nationwide.

Mr Hardern was defeated in his bid to be elected to the board last year by a two-thirds majority. A butler by profession, he is running again in an effort to force a vote on conversion.

WHO'S SUING WHO

JOHN WILLCOCK



THE Serious Fraud Office (SFO) is seeking confiscation and compensation orders to recover over £1.5m from two husband and wife teams, one Russian and one British, who were sentenced to jail yesterday for a sophisticated international fraud.

The defendants pleaded guilty earlier this year to inducing some 700 businesses in the former Soviet Union to pay travelling and hotel costs for senior executives to attend non-existent management seminars in California in the summer of 1996.

Together, the police from Thames Valley and Russia believe they have traced all the losers, and are embarking on the legal trail to return the money to the victims.

At Isleworth Crown Court yesterday Svetlana Kouznetsova, 34, was sentenced to 2 years for conspiracy to defraud. She was the prime mover behind the fraud and acknowledged all the facts of the Crown's case. Her husband, Igor Falkovsky, 35, was sentenced to jail for money laundering - the first time the SFO has ever

brought a money laundering charge. Michael Newman, 39, received 3 years for furnishing false information for accounting purposes, while his wife Maria, 31, got 18 months for conspiracy to go equipped to cheat.

Many thousands of glossy brochures for the "Investco Corporation", a company registered in Bermuda, were printed in Reading with the sole aim of enticing businesses in the Ukraine and Russia to part with their money.

Kouznetsova produced the brochure in Russian with the help of the Newmans and sent it out via a mail distribution service at Heathrow Airport in 1996.

The brochure claimed Investco was "a founder member of the Roosevelt Foundation", a charity said to be sponsoring the courses. There is no evidence the Roosevelt Foundation exists.

The brochure also claimed that Investco had "a turnover of US\$50 million in 1995". In fact it was bought by Newman and

Kouznetsova from an English company formation agent called "OCRA" in early 1996.

In response to the brochure, which invented a series of non-existent lectures from institutions like Yale University, Russian businesses sent money to Investco accounts in London and Geneva.

Correspondence from the victims was directed to mail drop addresses in California, Luxembourg and Belgium, from where it was forwarded to further mail drop addresses in Reading and London.

The SFO said yesterday: "Kouznetsova and Falkovsky operated only from these addresses and used only mobile telephones. This made finding them difficult."

"They were eventually caught when they were stopped in the City of London driving a car which was circulated as being of interest to Thames Valley Police," the SFO said.

The defendants benefited from the money by filtering it through a series of accounts under false names in countries as

varied as Andorra and Guernsey.

In the early part of the SFO investigation, the Newmans went to live in Spain. Michael Newman was arrested in August 1997 while visiting Switzerland. He was extradited from Switzerland in September last year. After that his wife returned voluntarily from Spain to face trial.

THE Financial Services Authority (FSA) won a series of court orders this week against Steven Rhodes, an unauthorised share dealer who the FSA claims tried to sell shares in an American company to investors in South Africa, Ireland and Jersey.

Mr Rhodes carried on his business from offices in Jermyn Street in London under the name "Stirling Montague & Speke". The High Court granted the FSA a worldwide freeze over Mr Rhodes's assets and ordered him to repatriate all funds he might hold overseas. It is understood that the FSA is seeking to recover about £250,000 which investors handed over in the belief that they

were buying shares in International Resorts and Entertainment Group, a Florida-based hotels company. The company has said any such share purchases were "null and void."

MARCELLA Levy-Aston, better known as "Marcella Detroit" out of Shakespeare's Sister, the formerly popular young persons' beat combo, has issued a writ against her record company.

The statuesque chanteuse, who lives in Camarillo, California, is seeking to clarify what royalties she is owed by FFR Records, trading as London Records, of Chancellors House, Chancellors Road, London.

Ms Levy-Aston is seeking between £10,000 and £50,000. Her writ seeks "damages for breach of contract" and "equitable compensation for breach of fiduciary duty" in respect of six separate contracts agreed with the record company, stretching from 19 July 1988 to December 1993.

Training course problems add to turmoil for Azlan

MARKET REPORT



PETER THAL LARSEN

IT'S HARD to imagine things getting any worse for Azlan, but they just did. The company, which distributes computer components for computer networks and provides training in information technology, was the stock market dog of 1997 after it revealed widespread accounting problems.

After a four-month investigation, during which the company's chairman, chief executive and finance director all departed, Azlan revealed a £15m loss and launched a rescue rights issue. The shares, which had been suspended during the investigation, plunged to a fraction of their previous value.

At the time, few observers expected Azlan to remain independent for long. But the buyers have failed to materialise and the problems have continued to pile up. Yesterday, the shares slipped 5p to 46.5p as the market got wind of problems in the training businesses.

Compaq, the US computer giant, has withdrawn the accreditation which allows Azlan to run training courses involving its products. Meanwhile, Computacenter, the soon-to-be-floated computer distributor, has decided to set up its own training arm rather than pass clients on to Azlan.

A spokeswoman yesterday pointed out that Azlan had simultaneously picked up accreditation to do training for Intel, the chip giant. But the turmoil and uncertainty is unlikely to end soon.

There was plenty of activity elsewhere in the information technology sector. Shares in derivatives software specialist Rolfe & Nolan plunged 147.5p to 325p as US rival SunGard withdrew its bid. The offer has attracted stiff opposition from users of the software.

Meanwhile, smaller IT consultancies were in demand. Admiral ended a strong week with a 42.5p hike to 1072.5p.

after-house broker SBC Warburg showed institutional investors around its French operations. The shares have doubled in value since September. Druid, specialising in SAP software, jumped 136.5p to 992.5p.

A rush of activity on the last day of the tax year helped the market to yet another record high, up 11.4 points at 6064.2. Dealers said private money continued to pour into personal equity plans.

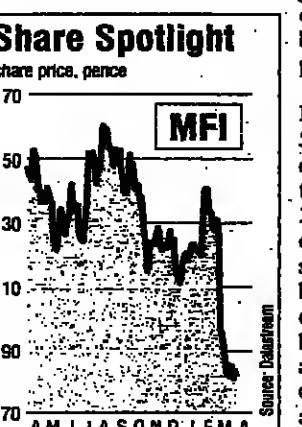
Meanwhile, institutions took the opportunity to realise tax losses in troubled DIY group MFI Furniture, which was one of the most heavily traded stocks of the day. Over 32 million of the shares, which have halved in value since last August, changed hands.

Vague chatter of a bid from B&Q, or even more improbably, Argos, failed to move the share price, which was unchanged at \$1.5p.

The market saw little news in Argos's final defence in its

battle with rival GUS, and marked the shares down 2p to 646p. GUS gained 6p to 760p.

Over in the Footsie, all the activity was in mobile phone group Orange, which rose sharply as SBC Warburg cleared its 4 per cent stake. The 42 million shares, left over from Warburg's placing of the stake it took over from British Aerospace a few days



ago, were all placed with institutions. They finished the day up 27p at 428p, suggesting that Warburg had made a tidy profit on the remaining shares.

Meanwhile, Warburg's telecom analysts were also said to be recommending rival mobile operator Vodafone, which put on 30p to 659p.

Standard Chartered gained 4p to 864p late in the day with Citicorp rumoured to be interested in making an approach.

Nuclear power generator British Energy added 33p to 585p as it extended the accounting life of two power stations. But National Power fell 27p to 573p as Merrill Lynch cut its recommendation on the shares to "reduce". The broker argued that with falling dividend cover and waning bid speculation the shares are at least 15 per cent overvalued compared to PowerGen, up 1p at 827p.

Consumer goods stocks

were hitting record highs with Unilever, up 20p at 628p and Reckitt & Colman, 50p better at 1225p, especially in demand.

Cable operator Cable & Wireless Communications, up 9.5p at 421p, continued to gain ground on Thursday's restructuring plan. Upstart telecom group Easys added another 42.5p to 707.5p after its deal with France Telecom and Deutsche Telekom.

News that Volkswagen had launched a higher bid for its Rolls-Royce luxury car unit lifted Vickers, up 6.5p at 237p, despite the group's insistence that it would continue to be an exclusive talks with BMW until at least the end of April.

Profit-taking hit electronics group Racal, down 10p to 333p, and car hire firm Avis Europe, 6.5p lighter at 237.5p.

News that it planned to pose of its Milton Keynes distribution warehouse as part of a cost-cutting drive lifted car parts distributor Parico 10.5p to 330.5p.

TAKING STOCK

MICROGEN jumped 35.5p to 118p. The software and services group, which has issued three profit warnings in a short space of time, has brought in Martin Ratcliffe, formerly in charge of Europe for US computer group Dell, as executive chairman. Mr Ratcliffe will subscribe for 3.5m shares - representing 10 per cent of the share capital - at 94p. He will also be issued with options over 1 million shares, also at 94p, which he will only be able to exercise fully if the share price reaches 225p.

LINGERIE and knitwear group Martin International gained 2p to 43p after reporting pre-tax profits almost doubled to £2.42m on sales up 10 per cent at £122m. The group supplies Marks & Spencer as well as a large number of international clients. Chairman Michael Kidd expects "further progress in 1998". House broker Beeson Gregory forecasts profits of £3.2m, rising to £4m in 1999.

12 week	High	Low	Stock	Price	Chg	Vol	P/E	Div	Yield
Alcoholic Beverages									
103	103	103	Adn Corp	103.00	+0.00	100	100	0.00	0.00
104	104	104	Adn Corp	104.00	+0.00	100	100	0.00	0.00
105	105	105	Adn Corp	105.00	+0.00	100	100	0.00	0.00
106	106	106	Adn Corp	106.00	+0.00	100	100	0.00	0.00
107	107	107	Adn Corp	107.00	+0.00	100	100	0.00	0.00
108	108	108	Adn Corp	108.00	+0.00	100	100	0.00	0.00
109	109	109	Adn Corp	109.00	+0.00	100	100	0.00	0.00
110	110	110	Adn Corp	110.00	+0.00	100	100	0.00	0.00
111	111	111	Adn Corp	111.00	+0.00	100	100	0.00	0.00
112	112	112	Adn Corp	112.00	+0.00	100	100	0.00	0.00
113	113	113	Adn Corp	113.00	+0.00	100	100	0.00	0.00
114	114	114	Adn Corp	114.00	+0.00	100	100	0.00	0.00
115	115	115	Adn Corp	115.00	+0.00	100	100	0.00	0.00
116	116	116	Adn Corp	116.00	+0.00	100	100	0.00	0.00
117	117	117	Adn Corp	117.00	+0.00	100	100	0.00	0.00
118	118	118	Adn Corp	118.00	+0.00	100	100	0.00	0.00
119	119	119	Adn Corp	119.00	+0.00	100	100	0.00	0.00
120	120	120	Adn Corp	120.00	+0.00	100	100	0.00	0.00
121	121	121	Adn Corp	121.00	+0.00	100	100	0.00	0.00
122	122	122	Adn Corp	122.00	+0.00	100	100	0.00	0.00
123	123	123	Adn Corp	123.00	+0.00	100	100	0.00	0.00
124	124	124	Adn Corp	124.00	+0.00	100	100	0.00	0.00
125	125	125	Adn Corp	125.00	+0.00	100	100	0.00	0.00
126	126	126	Adn Corp	126.00	+0.00	100	100	0.00	0.00
127	127	127	Adn Corp	127.00	+0.00	100	100	0.00	0.00
128	128	128	Adn Corp	128.00	+0.00	100	100	0.00	0.00
129	129	129	Adn Corp	129.00	+0.00	100	100	0.00	0.00
130	130	130	Adn Corp	130.00	+0.00	100	100	0.00	0.00
131	131	131	Adn Corp	131.00	+0.00	100	100	0.00	0.00
132	132	132	Adn Corp	132.00	+0.00	100	100	0.00	0.00
133	133	133	Adn Corp	133.00	+0.00	100	100	0.00	0.00
134	134	134	Adn Corp	134.00	+0.00	100	100	0.00	0.00
135	135	135	Adn Corp	135.00	+0.00	100	100	0.00	0.00
136	136	136	Adn Corp	136.00	+0.00	100	100	0.00	0.00
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138	138	138	Adn Corp	138.00	+0.00	100	100	0.00	0.00
139	139	139	Adn Corp	139.00	+0.00	100	100	0.00	0.00
140	140	140	Adn Corp	140.00	+0.00	100	100	0.00	0.00
141	141	141	Adn Corp	141.00	+0.00	100	100	0.00	0.00
142	142	142	Adn Corp	142.00	+0.00	100	100	0.00	0.00
143	143	143	Adn Corp	143.00	+0.00	100	100	0.00	0.00
144	144	144	Adn Corp	144.00	+0.00	100	100	0.00	0.00
145	145	145	Adn Corp	145.00	+0.00	100	100	0.00	0.00
146	146	146	Adn Corp	146.00	+0.00	100	100	0.00	0.00
147	147	147	Adn Corp	147.00	+0.00	100	100	0.00	0.00
148	148	148	Adn Corp	148.00	+0.00	100	100	0.00	0.00
149	149	149	Adn Corp	149.00	+0.00	100	100	0.00	0.00
150	150	150	Adn Corp	150.00	+0.00	100	100	0.00	0.00
151	151	151	Adn Corp	151.00	+0.00	100	100	0.00	0.00
152	152	152	Adn Corp	152.00	+0.00	100	100	0.00	0.00
153	153	153	Adn Corp	153.00	+0.00	100	100	0.00	0.00
154	154	154	Adn Corp	154.00	+0.00	100	100	0.00	0.00
155	155	155	Adn Corp	155.00	+0.00	100	100	0.00	0.00
156	156	156	Adn Corp	156.00	+0.00	100	100	0.00	0.00
157	157	157	Adn Corp	157.00	+0.00	100	100	0.00	0.00
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162	162	162	Adn Corp	162.00	+0.00	100	100	0.00	0.00
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166	166	166	Adn Corp	166.00	+0.00	100	100	0.00	0.00
167	167	167	Adn Corp	167.00	+0.00	100	100	0.00	0.00
168	168	168	Adn Corp	168.00	+0.00	100	100	0.00	0.00
169	169	169	Adn Corp	169.00	+0.00	100	100	0.00	0.00
170	170	170	Adn Corp	170.00	+0.00	100	100	0.00	0.00
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189	189	189	Adn Corp	189.00	+0.00	100	100	0.00	0.00
190	190	190	Adn Corp	190.00	+0.00	100	100	0.00	0.00
191	191	191	Adn Corp	191.00	+0.00	100	100	0.00	0.00
192	192	192	Adn Corp	192.00	+0.00	100	100	0.00	0.00
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195	195	195	Adn Corp	195.00	+0.00	100	100	0.00	0.00
196	196	196	Adn Corp	196.00	+0.00	100	100	0.00	0.00
197	197	197	Adn Corp	197.00	+0.00	100	100	0.00	0.00
198	198	198	Adn Corp	198.00	+0.00	100	100	0.00	0.00
199	199	199	Adn Corp	199.00	+0.00	100	100	0.00	0.00
200	200	200	Adn Corp	200.00	+0.00	100	100	0.00	0.00

Low	Stock	Price	Chg	Vol	P/E	Div	Yield
Food Products							
201	Adn Corp	201.00	+0.00	100	100	0.00	0.00
202	Adn Corp	202.00	+0.00	100	100	0.00	0.00
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Raise a glass to the English pub

**Paul Vallyely's
BRITAIN**



Fleet Street:

It was a dirty job but someone had to do it – investigating the changing face of the nation's hostelry proved to be thirsty, and tiring, work

THE THINGS I do in pursuit of truth, I have been on a pub crawl on your behalf. This is part of an intensive in-depth research programme. However, I have to report an early hitch. Your two-man team began at Charing Cross, the traditional starting point for journeys around the kingdom, but eight pubs later we had progressed no further than Southwark where our journey was brought to a halt by, well, shall we say, the onset of fatigue.

My companion was Ted Bruning, an affable cove whose girth testifies to a lifelong dedication to the subject of our inquiry. Ted is the deputy editor of *What's Brewing* and author of numerous guides to the Campaign for Real Ale. Our purpose was to consider the changing face of the English pub and, since later this month sees the publication of his new book, *Historic Pubs of London*, the capital seemed as good a place as any to begin, though our theme was national, and, indeed, as the drink took hold, became positively universal.

We began with a swift mid-morning half of Sam Smith's mild in the obvious rendezvous, The Chandos, by the corner of Trafalgar Square. But its interior was completely done out by the brewery in 1984. We needed something more Victorian – for that is the period in which the story of the English public house as a forum for unmitigated drinking really begins. So, we set off up St Martin's Lane for The Salisbury with its extravagance of

dark wood, etched glass and splendid art nouveau standing lamps so typical of the gin palaces which spread like a rash all over England during the 1890s. They were the Firkins of their day – and they tell a cautionary tale for the modern brewing industry.

Over a pint of Marston's Pedigree, Ted told the story of Frank Crocker, an enterprising Victorian who saw the railway approaching from the North and estimated it would terminate at Maida Vale. There he built a palace of marble and mahogany with a magnificent Jacobean-style coffered ceiling and yards of gleaming woodwork.

Alas for Crocker, the line turned a few degrees at St John's Wood to terminate not at his door but about a mile away in Marylebone. Crocker went bust and killed himself by jumping out of an upstairs window. His pub, The Crown, was subsequently renamed Crocker's Folly. This was the grandest foolishness, but it was only one of many.

It had all begun, said Ted as we made our way down The Strand, in 1830 with the passing of the Beer Act, when Queen Victoria's ministers decided that ale, a virtuous drink, was to be encouraged to undercut the sellers of gin which was reckoned the nation's ruin. The Act allowed anyone to set up a beerhouse on payment of a token fee. The pub was born – before that hostelry had been ancient inns and taverns which also provided accom-



Only here for the beer: Tom Bruning, above, enjoys a pint and a traditional pub atmosphere

Photograph: Brian Harris

modation and food. Indeed, the very term public house is Victorian. But it also meant undesirable could open low dives throughout the capital's slums. They became havens for thieves and robbers.

By 1869, said Ted over a pint of Sam Smith's mild (again) in the Cheshire Cheese, Fleet Street, the politicians had seen the error of their ways and the act was repealed. As magistrates tried to reduce the number of licences, landlords tried to make their premises more respectable, creating opulent temples of imperial mahogany and plate-glass glittering in the new-fangled gaslight. But they spent too much. The returns did not cover the cost and there was

an almighty crash in which even the big brewers went for five years without any profits.

"I hope this lot go the same way," said Ted in an amiable tone as we entered Scruffy Murphy's. I had been in this pub before. It had then been the King and Keys, the local of the *Daily Telegraph* next door. That was in the days before all the national press moved out of London to remote places like Canary Wharf. The pub had not been Irishised in those days, though I do remember having a distinctly dodgy encounter with an Ulster printer who had accused me of mimicking his accent. No danger of that now. "There are no strangers here just friends

who have over met," said the yucky legend by the door, along with all the Oscar Wilde quotes about work being the curse of the drinking classes, and so forth. The place was replete with cod Irishness: the fittings of a fake small town hardware store, framed legends about Scruffy Murphy and a donkey, and bogus hints about "the crack". "Crack is Irish for 'a pleasant association of people' – and that's the one thing which Allied Domecq [the owners] can't guarantee," said Ted, darkly.

Still, its days may be numbered. Theme pubs tend to have a life of around four years before the novelty-hungry punters get bored. This

Scruffy Murphy's had a French waiter who knew nothing about Guinness, nachos at the top of the lunch-menu and piped Bob Marley instead of the expected diddy-i-di music. But don't rejoice prematurely, the brewers are now running experiments on Czech bars and Australian backpacker pubs, Ted announced. Even now someone somewhere is manufacturing hats with dangling cords in industrial quantities.

Ted is distinctly unimpressed with the corporate approach to selling beer. "They segment the market – with young people's pubs, family pubs, gay pubs. They even have a category of pubs for dissidents like me." Allied Domecq (clearly not Ted's favourite people) are just

about to launch a brand of old people's Saga-market pubs, called Golden Oaks. "They call it increasing choice – and in cash-over-the-till terms it makes sense. But pubs were once about community, which is being destroyed. Market segmentation is dangerous because it tells people they have nothing to say to each other."

Yet despite the £12m a week the industry spends on pub conversions it is a declining trade: down from 37m barrels in 1991 to 34m in 1996. At present, 80 per cent of beer is drunk in pubs but, on present trends, by 2007 half of it will be drunk at home. "The death of the English pub has been much trailed but it is happening slowly. The returns just don't justify the capital tied up."

But aren't his protests just fighting a losing battle, I asked as we entered The Old Bell, a 17th-century inn built by Wren for workers on St Paul's. It had been bought by developers in 1897, but they went bust before it could be turned into a gin palace. It is, thankfully, too small to attract the attention of the Firkin people today. "A losing battle?" said Ted, who thought he'd have a short time. "Yes, it's like boiling with a sieve."

But a sighting of a rare example of Shropshire's Three Tuns Bitter in The Blackfriar cheered him up, as did the pub itself, with its layers of marble in browns and ochres, its mosaic ceilings and its bas-reliefs in bronze and brass. "The owner was a big wheel in the Arts & Crafts movement and the place was completely reworked by Henry Poole RA, around 1902," said Ted. "It's one of the most extraordinary pubs in the country, and all because of the taste of one man. It's a perfect example of something which doesn't happen in a corporate structure. Modern corporations don't have any moral or aesthetic values. They are driven only by money."

Undoubtedly, I said, and we moved on to the Badge and Coat across the river. We have to resist these people, he said. As soon as this pub closes the revolution starts, I said. But first I thought I'd go and have a little lie down.

Historic Pubs of London, by Ted Bruning, (Pion Books, £14.99) is published on 16 April.

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TOMORROW IN THE SEVEN-SECTION

INDEPENDENT ON SUNDAY



Rock'n'roll suicide ...

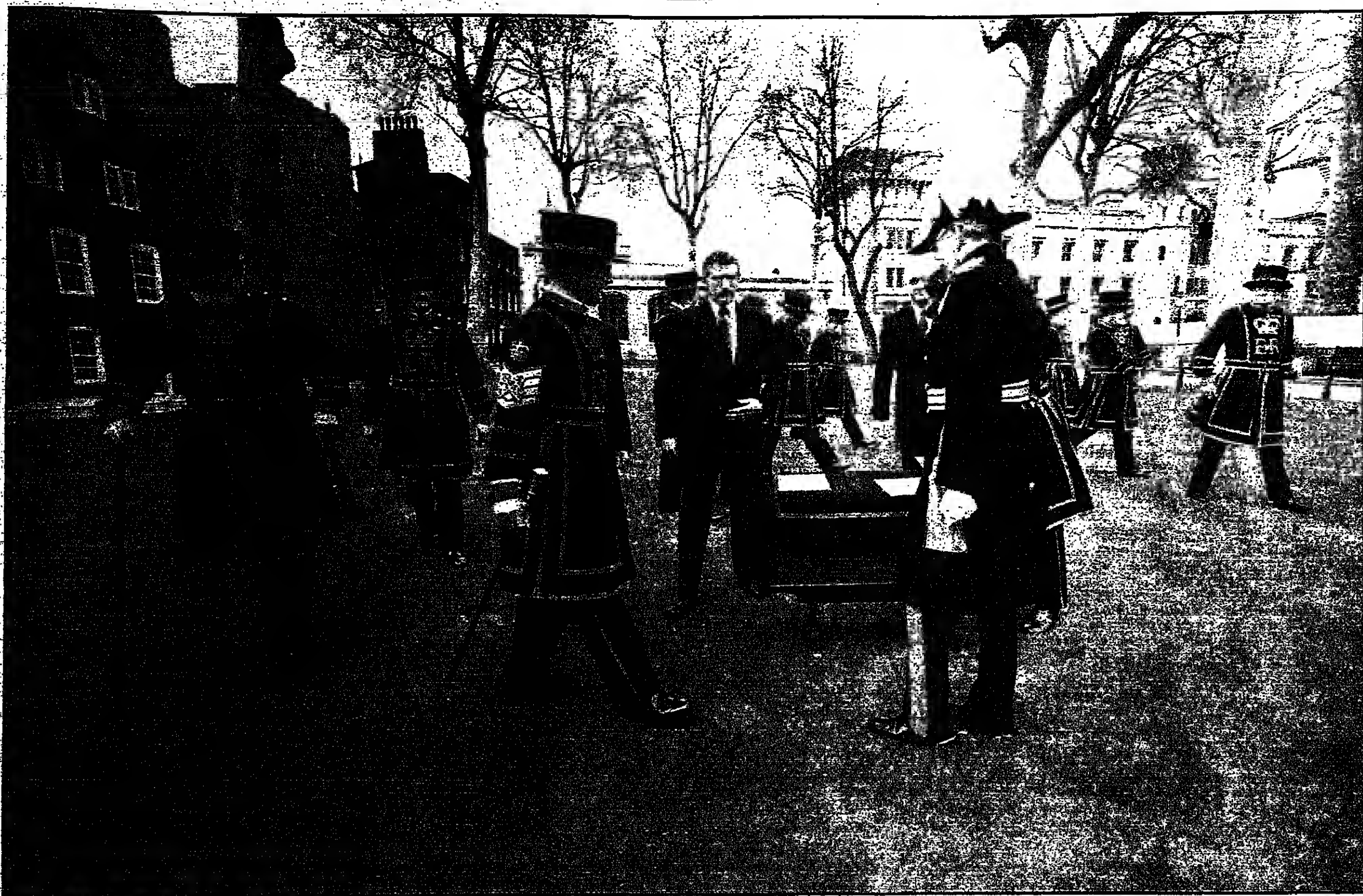
... that was the coroner's verdict. But girlfriend Paula Yates reckons other forces were at work. In the *Sunday Review* tomorrow, the most thorough investigation yet into the strange death of Michael Hutchence



TIME OFF

TRAVEL, LEISURE & SPORT

Saturday 4 April 1998



PICTURE OF THE WEEK The swearing-in ceremony of three new wardens of the Tower of London by David Rose. To order a 12x9in print (price £15) call 0171-293 2534

Week in, week out

William Hartston reveals the truth behind the decision to abandon Paula Jones's case against the president

What a good week it has been for Bill Clinton. On Thursday came the news that the case of Paula Jones v William Jefferson Clinton would not go ahead. An Arkansas judge, we were told, had thrown out all the charges.

But was it really so simple? Combing the hairier fringes of the week's news stories, we have found remarkable evidence of links between academics in Britain and San Diego which may have played a vital role in this whole affair.

The story begins in New Orleans at last week's meeting of the Society of Behavioural Medicine. According to one paper read at the meeting, researchers at the University of California at San Diego have been correlating people's lifespans, as

recorded on 27 years' worth of death certificates, with their initials. The results showed that people with cheerful initials, such as JOY and GOD, live significantly longer than those with initials such as BUM or PIG.

"People are usually pretty careful not to name their kid Knucklehead, but I guess it's easy for parents not to notice what's happening with the initials. They need to watch that," said Nicholas Christenfeld, a psychologist.

But what, you may ask, has this to do with WJC, the well-known president and philanderer? His initials would seem to come into the "neutral" or "meaningless" category, suggestive of an average lifespan.

Not when you think about them. Haven't you ever wondered why he calls himself "Bill" and not "William"? Forget his ostentatious middle name, and you will see the reason. William Clinton is WC - a most unappealingly laconic combination, and reason enough for him to change the W into a B.

That, however, left him with the first-name combination of BJ which, our researches have revealed, is an American colloquialism for oral sex, or blow-job. It is any wonder, then, that Mr Clinton, with

his self-esteem shattered at being named after a public convenience, should seek solace in that particular manner? Would TS Eliot have written such fine poetry if his initials had been reversed and his whole name made to read "toilets" backwards?

Yet that is only half the story. While the behavioural medics were strutting their stuff

Who knows what the foetal Bill Clinton was whistling in the womb

in New Orleans, the British Psychological Society was adding more potential fuel to Clinton's defence at its annual meeting in Brighton. A paper by Stephen Evans of Keele University showed the results of playing unusual folk music songs to women in their 21st week of pregnancy. The tunes played to them were subsequently shown to have a soothing effect on their babies. The rate of kicking of a baby was reduced by half when it was played a tune it "recognised".

Just think what Clinton's lawyers could have made of all this. Was it possible that his mother had listened to Lou Davis's tempting ballad "Hot Lips"? What prenatally corrupting effect might it have had on the foetal president to have heard Bessie Smith telling him that "I ain't No Sin to Take Off Your Skin and Dance Around in Your Bones"? Even an apparently innocent chorus of "Heigh-ho Blow the Man Down" could have been held responsible for all his subsequent problems.

Add those mitigating circumstances to his possible plea of WC Initial Induced B-J Transference Syndrome, and you will understand why the case against Bill Clinton would never have stood up in court.

Even the matter of his allegedly curved penis might have been explained by hearing the song "I've Never Seen a Straight Banana", yet in view of another of the week's academic findings, even that might not have been necessary, because according to data presented at the meeting of the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons in New Orleans, a golf swing can create a terrible twisting effect. Comparing golfers with non-golfers, researchers have identified a twist in the bones of the

spine caused by the stress of swinging golf clubs. And, it must be asked, if this can twist your vertebrae, what might it do to a malleable penis? Curved genitals? It's all torque!

Finally - and nothing to do with Clinton - the erratum of the week. Headed "Mexico - bodily parts", the following cor-

If TS Eliot had been ST Eliot, his name would have read 'toilets' backwards

rection appeared on news wires: "In a March 28 story about the remains of national heroes, the Associated Press erroneously reported that the severed arm of a former president and general in Mexico's 1910-1917 revolution is preserved under glass. The arm of Gen Alvaro Obregon was displayed for many years at a Mexico City monument, but was removed and cremated in late 1989. The ashes were buried with the rest of his remains in the north-western state of Sonora."

INSIDE



TRAVEL

Caribbean: Britain's crown jewels	2/3
In the wild west of Wales	4/5
48 hours in Vienna	6
Gone with the wind: learning to sail	8
CROSSWORD	10
GARDENING	12/13

SPORT

Golf: how good is Tiger Woods?	15
Grand National: big-race guide	16-18
Football: dark days for Dalglish	26





SIMON CALDER

The Independent's travel desk, unlike those of other newspapers, pays its own way. So I am hypersensitive about rip-offs. I also try to buy air tickets that do not allow changes, since they are vastly cheaper than the flexible variety.

I cheerfully bought a £135 return ticket from London to Amsterdam with the stipulation "No changes, no refunds". Then British Airways found itself unable to deliver me to Amsterdam punctually, owing to a technical problem, and I couldn't get to Amsterdam airport in time for the flight home.

No problem, I assumed. The airline has fouled up, so surely BA will allow me to change the booking without penalty.

"Certainly, sir, you can upgrade to the next fare level. That'll be £156."

Could EasyJet find me a seat on its flight back to Luton? "Certainly, sir, that'll be £42."

The prize for guessing which I took is the useless return half of a BA London-Amsterdam ticket.

All of which is a long-winded way of applauding the no-nonsense approach of carriers such as EasyJet, Ryanair and Debonair. This week they were joined by Go, the airline with the shortest name in the world. Go, as its rivals are keen to remind us, is an offshoot of British Airways. But it needs to distance itself from the self-styled "World's Favourite Airline", for a couple of reasons.

The first is that the European Commission is watching closely for evidence that BA is underwriting Go in a bid to put its rivals out of business.

The second, and possibly more critical, reason is that BA may lose its existing high-fare customers to the new low-fare airline.

The condition that restricts almost all cheap tickets within Europe is that you have to stay away for at least a Saturday night. If you have ever found yourself sleepless in Stuttgart on a Sunday when you'd rather be in Stranraer, Shrewsbury or Slough, you will realise why the airlines can get away with charging so much to people who

would prefer to be at home. But Go - which EasyJet claims has "photocopied" its business plan - applies no such penalties. You can save a fortune on short-haul flights to Europe in return for forgoing an in-flight meal. The term the travel industry uses to describe turning high-yield customers into your own, low-value ones, is "cannibalisation". That'll give BA something to chew on.

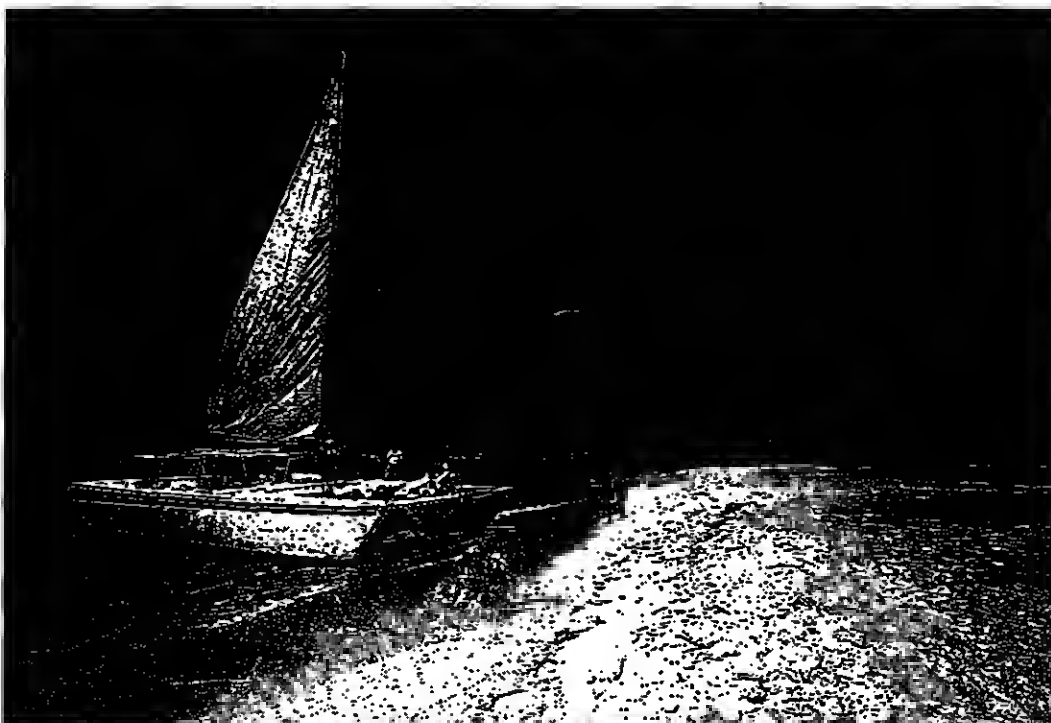
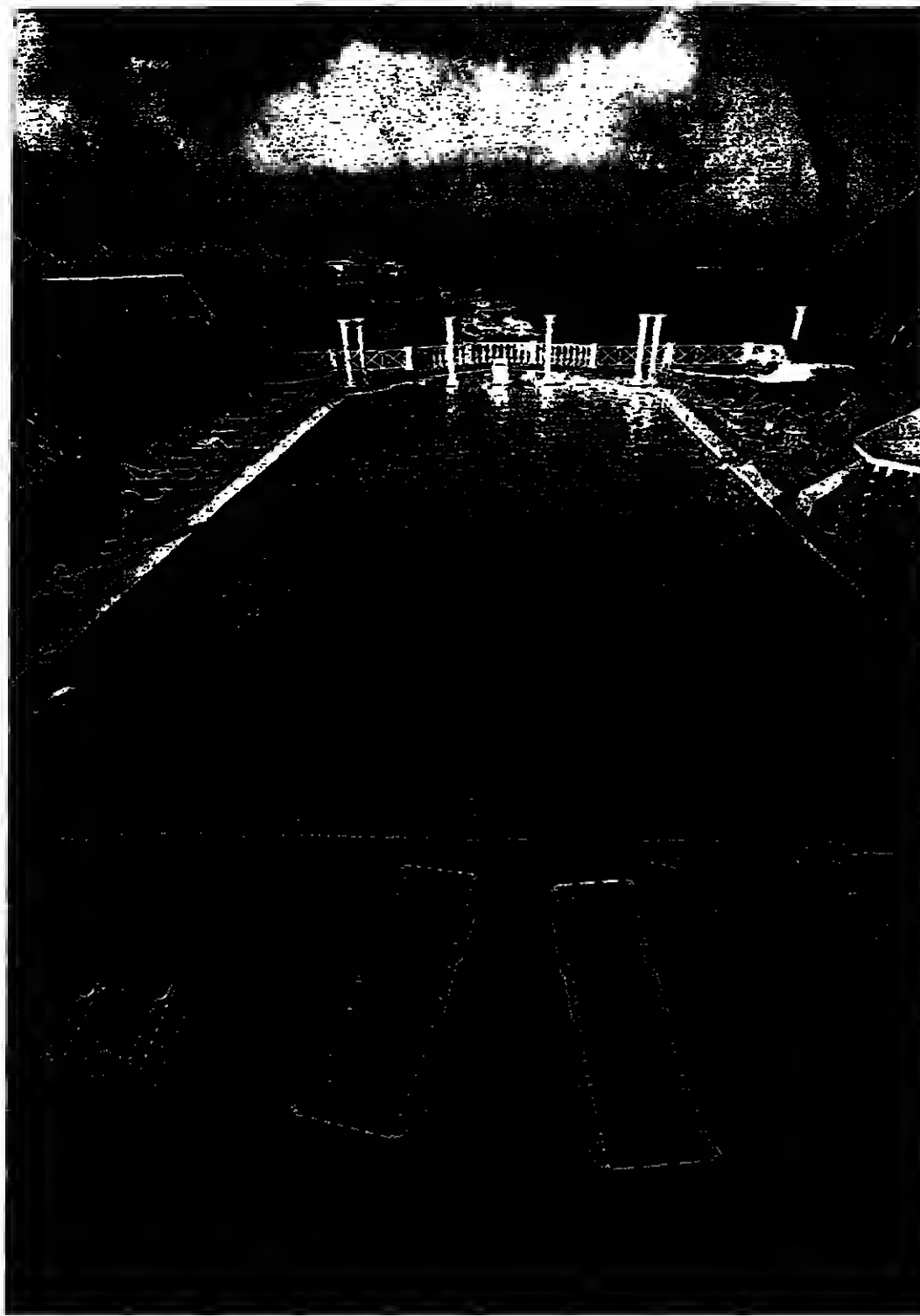
The first occasion when the strength of British Airways' links with its new offshoot will be tested is likely to be when a Go plane "goes technical" somewhere in Europe, and there happens to be a BA aircraft heading back to Britain. If the Go (or no-Go?) passengers aren't keen to sit quietly and wait for the problem to be fixed, they may well argue a case for seats on the next BA flight home. Now, there's a good scene for a fly-on-the-wall documentary.

The new film *Oscar and Lucinda* opened last night. Say what you like about the screen adaptation of Peter Carey's novel (it's half-an-hour too long, I'd say) the movie will do wonders for tourism. The story, about high-stakes gambling between an Australian entrepreneur (Cate Blanchett) and an uncannily acute British preacher (Ralph Fiennes), was shot almost entirely on location.

The Australian portion was filmed "at practically every National Trust house in New South Wales", says the producer, Robin Dalton. Sydney was originally to be played by Hobart in Tasmania, but Ms Dalton says, "We couldn't afford it, so we masked out all the tall buildings."

The most beautiful location of all is, sadly, out of bounds to the tourist. The place to which the preacher delivers a crystal chapel is a river bank at Jacadgerce, west of Grafton in northern NSW. "We had to build a road in order to get to it," says Ms Dalton - "then take the road away."

Some British scenes, such as New College and Merton College Chapel in Oxford, look familiar. So, too, does HMS *Warrior* in Portsmouth. But if you think the scenes set on the Devon coast look uncharacteristically wild, that's because they were shot in north Cornwall. The venerable Pridaux Place, near Padstow, is open for paying visitors from Easter; call Peter Pridaux-Brune on 01841 532411.



Barbados bounty: the Crane Beach Hotel overlooking glorious beaches Photograph: David Ashdown

A lift from the Crane

Barbados has a hotel that has been offering the same simple pleasures since 1886. Clare Garner pays a visit

If your image of Barbados is of sipping overpriced cocktails in the company of B-list celebrities in hotels with names like Glitter Bay and Cobblers' Cove, you haven't heard the half of it. The other side of the island is so different that some tourists enjoy a two-island holiday without leaving the one.

Before anyone had dreamt of Sandy Lane, the centrepiece of the main drag of snazzy hotels on the Caribbean Coast, visitors were coming to The Crane, on the southern corner of the Atlantic Coast, just up from Poul Bay. It has offered the same formula for 110 years. The Crane may not appeal to Michael Winner, perhaps (he couldn't possibly spend his £20,000 annual Sandy Lane budget there even if he tried), but it is Barbados's best-kept secret.

You could easily miss it. The chipped pink signpost at the end of the track and the surrounding scrubland look unpromising. There are a handful of vehicles in the car park and no attendants in uniform. The only sign of life is a notice on the wall: "Our Mission Statement: HAPPINESS".

Keep going through the white arches, and the impact is dazzling. High on a cliff, an exquisitely proportioned pool overhangs one of the world's most dramatic beaches. Half a mile of bleached beach stretches out below, the natural beauty unspoiled by a single sunlounger.

But where is everybody? Some people boogieboard in the surf; others kick a football around half-heartedly; a few hardcore tanners are splayed on the sand, fanned by the breeze... 20 people at the most. The beach is pretty much your own. This is partly because the hotel has only 18 bedrooms, and although daytrippers can spend a day on it for five bajan dollars, it is half an hour's drive from the island's action and few bother. Long may it stay that way.

The Crane is Barbados's oldest resort. Pre-1886, it was a private residence. In the days when it wasn't done for women to be seen swimming in public, the hotel provided a sea-bathing spot for such purposes. The Horse, named after England's horse-drawn bathing machines, is much as it was when it was built in 1769. One can imag-

ine ladies in voluminous costumes and bathing caps being chaperoned down the steps to take a discreet dip.

Paul Doyle, 49, from Toronto, has managed The Crane for 10 years. He describes his clients as "independent": writers, painters, sculptors, musicians. Those who stay at The Crane can afford to stay anywhere, "but they know what they like and are not worried about what is the accepted thing".

Sculptures are dotted around the grounds. Televisions are available on request, but guests rarely feel the need. Every Tuesday night there is "something on the house for guests to get to know each other", but don't get too excited about themed evenings: there aren't any. Mr Doyle "keeps meaning to fix up the sign", but somehow never gets round to it - and it doesn't really matter. For as *Fielding's Guide to the Caribbean* put it in 1971 (one of the more recent guidebook entries for The Crane): "This is the place for those who are satisfied with simple pleasures."

In 1936, the author Raymond Savage outlined a suitable way to spend a day at The Crane. At 8am he recommends: "Arrange for a waiter to meet you at the top of the steps bearing a tray on which is an iced nog made of milk, an egg yolk, rum (if not to your liking, brandy), and sugar to taste. Drink delicately through a straw, but do not let it go flat..." The rest of the day consists of sitting in the sun, sleeping and swimming, rounded off with one or two green swizzles and long, weak whiskies, some flying fish and a frog chorus. He concludes: "A week or two... will restore the most jaded to a measure of health and strength which is quite remarkable."

The same is true today - but go now. The sad truth is that Mr Doyle has designs on the scrubland, where he hopes to build a host of condominiums.

Crane Beach Hotel, Crane, St Philip (00 1 246 423 6220; fax: 00 1 246 423 5343; e-mail: cranebeach@sunbeach.net) is 10 minutes east of Barbados airport. Off-peak rates (April-Dec) are US\$90 (about £56) per night for a room, up to US\$235 (about £159) for a two-bedroom suite. Corresponding peak rates are US\$150 (about £94) and US\$425 (about £265).

GOING TO BARBADOS

Getting there: British Airways (0345 22211) and British West Indian Airways (0181 577 1100) fly between Heathrow and Barbados; BA also flies from Gatwick. The lowest official fare on BWIA is £762, but discount agents such as Caribbean Connection (021-344 3000) offer lower fares. Charter flights are available from Gatwick and Manchester, mostly

catering for inclusive tour customers of companies such as Thomson (0990 502399) and Airtravels (0541 500479). Money: sterling is easily convertible to the Barbadian dollar at a rate of about £1 to B\$4.50. Further information: Barbados Tourism Authority, 263 Tottenham Court Road, London W1P 9AA (071-636 9448).

THE INDEPENDENT

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Relax, you're among friends

Perhaps it was during the slow shuffle as we inched towards the airport's immigration desk that we first realised Grenada was such a special place. Hot and tired after the flight, we found a steel band playing an exuberant welcome behind the bougainvillea, and chilled bottles of the local Caribbean beer pressed into our hands. The hour we waited to have our passports stamped was spent tapping our feet to the music and watching children spin and twirl.

Grenada is one of the Windward Islands. A little larger than the Isle of Wight, it lies at the bottom of the curve of Caribbean islands which stretch down from Cuba towards Venezuela. Visitors come mainly for the classic beaches (white sand, palms and coral reefs), but there are plenty of other attractions.

The capital, St George's, overlooks a natural harbour. With its whitewashed houses, wrought-iron balconies and red-tiled roofs, it has a distinctly Mediterranean feel. Steep, narrow streets lead past stone churches with stained-glass windows. At the top of the hill, overlooking the harbour, is Fort George, guarded by a row of cannons pointing over the bay.

Most of St George's visitors are day-trippers, ferried ashore from the gleaming cruise ships anchored in the bay. Steel bands drum the passengers ashore and eager taxi drivers jostle for their custom. Their first stop is the market, noisy and colourful, where bananas, breadfruit, yams and papaya are piled under the shade of black umbrellas. A man brandishing a machete sells coconuts with a

straw to drink the milk. The musky scent of nutmeg, cloves and cinnamon hangs everywhere, a reminder of Grenada's other name, the Spice Island.

Away from St George's and the luxury hotels, Grenada feels more like a third-world country. The roads are a collection of pot-holes laced together by narrow ribbons of asphalt. Goats and cows are tethered by the roadside and chickens scratch underneath the little wooden houses built on stilts. Children fill plastic bags with water from standpipes and stagger home leaving a wet trail behind them.

Chapters of history lie behind the names on the map. The town of Sauteurs got its name from the desperate attempt of the Carib Indians to escape the French in 1651, when they jumped off the cliffs to their death on the rocks below. The mixture of French and English names - Grenville, Lance aux Epines, Woburn and La Sage - hints at the series of fierce battles for ownership of the island after Christopher Columbus first caught sight of it 500 years ago.

The most recent conflict was just 14 years ago. Grenada made headlines across the world when American troops led an invasion force to crush the Marxist leadership of the People's Revolutionary Government. It was an extraordinary act of muscle-flexing, provoked by the paranoia of the Cold War. The barbed wire on the beaches has now gone, and the only reminder of the fighting we saw was bullet scars

on buildings near the Cuban-built airport at Port Salines. But there has been longer-term damage. The "intervention", as it is now called, damaged hopes of attracting more foreign tourists and investment. Both have been slow to return.

While Grenada was waiting for the tourists to come back, it suffered a further setback. Prices for its main exports, spices and cocoa, collapsed. Soon afterwards there was another blow. For the last 12 months, no bananas have been exported, the result of a World Trade Organisation agreement which ruled against Europe's preferential prices for Windward Island produce. With agriculture in decline and little industry to replace it, jobs are

scarce. But Grenadians seem resigned rather than angry. Victor, who makes a living weaving baskets from palm leaves, told us that he expected his teenage children to be forced to leave the island to find work.

Like many other Caribbean islands, Grenada was formed by volcanic activity. One of the craters of the long-dormant volcanoes is now a lake, cradled high in the mountains at about 2,000ft. Known as the Grand Etang, its water shimmers like molten metal, mysterious and uninviting. To get there, we drove up steep, winding roads, past rows of nutmeg and cocoa trees, until we reached the rain-forest, wrapped in clouds. We followed narrow paths between the trees around the lake, where giant bamboo towered, whispering and creaking. Ferns and orchids smothered mahogany trees, and scarlet hibiscus flowers dropped to the ground from the dancing branches of the blue mahoe tree.

While we were exploring we often got lost, but never for long. People were quick to give us directions. There was no sense of urgency. The laid-back attitude and slow pace of life were slightly irritating for the first few days. Once we had begun to relax, though, this became one of the most

enchanting aspects of Grenada.

More delights were waiting underwater. Several miles of coral reefs on the west coast mean that scuba diving and snorkelling are popular. The reefs have also claimed numerous wrecks. One of these, the *Bianca C*, is a magnet for divers. The luxury Italian liner caught fire just outside St George's in 1961, and later sank. Now the ship lies upright on the ocean bed, about 100ft below the surface - not a dive for the novice.

Meanwhile, at sunset on dry land, in bars on beaches, visitors order rum punch and play "island spotting", the Caribbean version of train-spotting, comparing the delights of Antigua, Tobago, St Kitts and Barbados. Most of the comparisons, though, favoured Grenada ("less commercial", "people more friendly") and we realised we were the real winners; we had found the right island on our first visit. Beginner's luck.

Both British Airways (0345 22211) and Caledonian Airways fly to Grenada. The cheapest flights are on Caledonian Airways through Golden Lion Travel (01293 567 800) with the lowest priced ticket at £311 including tax. The Grenada Board of Tourism is on 0171-370 5164/5.

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The crown's jewels

Is it whales, fish and coral you're after, or a luxury gulag? Hugh O'Shaugnessy visits the Turks and Caicos Islands, Britain's most forgotten outpost

It was a long, hot and noisy evening of dominoes at the Lions Bar at Cockburn Town, the tiny capital of the Turks and Caicos Islands, but eventually the match was decided. The Cable and Wireless team came out on top, and we all drifted off merrily into the warm night of Britain's most forgotten West Indian colony.

The Turks and Caicos Islands are as the British West Indies were years ago, and as many traditionalists would like them still to be. Scruffy places with potholed roads where a certain loyalty to Our Dear Queen and her representative the Governor is tempered with a good deal of impatience with the Colonial Office - sorry, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office - in Whitehall. Here you find Lilliputian places where the politics are often bizarre, and life is lackadaisical, and where the constant temptation to emigrate to New York is tempered by the realisation that it is a cold, unfriendly city far away.

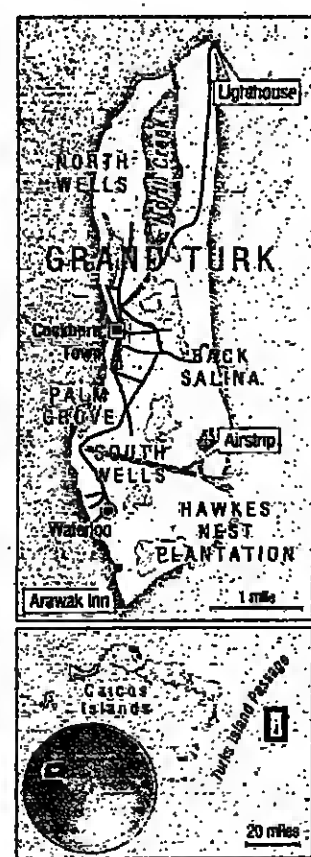
In the TCI the local charm gets into the blood of outsiders to such an extent that one august governor from London was known to chase the best looking of the policewomen round the table of his rickety and termite-ridden official lodgings - and sometimes catch them. It is a place where peo-

ple say "hello" in the street, and offer you a lift if they pass you in a car as you take a stroll.

Cockburn Town, the seat of government, where the present governor lives hamelessly in Waterloo, his refurbished and almost termite-free mansion, is on Grand Turk, an island which is neither grand nor Turkish but is utterly charming and shyly friendly. The accepted wisdom is that the name comes from the Turk's head cactus which grows here. But it could come from Barbary pirates who are supposed to have crossed the Atlantic. Nobody really knows - or cares.

For years the islanders made a precarious living producing sun-dried sea salt in pans, which still lie ruined and abandoned on many islands. The colony's former arms featured a sailing ship about to load the "white gold" which was piled in conical heaps in the foreground. When the government had new flags made during the last century, these came back with little doors drawn on the conical white heaps, which a helpful but misguided London flag-maker had taken for igloos.

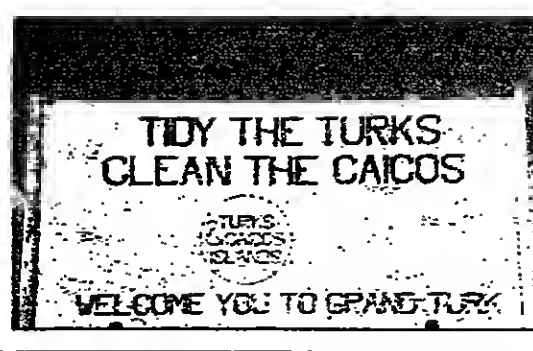
The islanders also once grew sisal grass for rope. But the bottom has long since fallen out of both the salt and the rope markets. For generations, wrecking was both a sport and



THE TURKS AND CAICOS TRAIL

There are no direct flights between the UK and the Turks and Caicos. The best single-airline connection is on American Airlines (0345 787789) from Heathrow - and, from next month, Gatwick - via Miami. The lowest fare quoted for travel in May is £679 return, but availability is tricky.

Alternatives include flying British Airways (0345 222111) to Nassau or San Juan, or finding a charter to Santo Domingo, and transferring to Providenciales. UK Turks and Caicos tourist office: Mitre House, 66 Abbey Road, Bush Hill Park, Enfield, Middlesex EN1 2RQ (0181-350 1017).



a livelihood as unwary captains were lured on to the coral reefs. The lighthouse on the north point of Grand Turk was erected only over the strong objections of those who saw their

fun and their incomes in jeopardy - and, indeed, their supplies of wood, since no trees grow on the islands.

Now these reefs and the azure sea are once again the is-

lands' fortune, as visitors are drawn here by some of the world's finest snorkelling and diving. At the fine deserted beach at the Arawak Inn on Grand Turk the other day I saw

Canadian tourists wading ashore from a launch, overcome by the experience of seeing a hump-back whale teaching her week-old calf, weighing no more than a ton or so, to flip and manoeuvre in the water. If you are a diver or snorkeller, you have to go only a few hundred yards out before the sea plunges down into the abyss 7,000 feet deep that separates Grand Turk from the Caicos Islands. There is fishing, too. On purchasing a licence (cost US\$10) fishermen can catch marlin of weights of 350lb and more.

On the island of South Caicos, far from governors and museums, the few tourists have the beaches and the sea to themselves.

Providenciales. Provo for short, is something very different. Discovered two or three decades ago by a rich coterie of Roosevelts and Rockefellerers, it bloomed when the British government paid for a new airport and persuaded the Club Med to set up along a broad white beach, 12 miles long. There are now 12 hotels there, and a couple of banks. The TCI's only casino is at the Turquoise Reef, but, in deference to the religious convictions of the islanders, it is closed on the Lord's Day.

It seems a pity that the hotel accommodation on Provo is

of the gilded concentration camp variety which aims to keep the holiday-maker from spending any money outside its gates. All this new development, in a place that had no roads and no cars 35 years ago, gives Provo the feeling of a sort of Basilidon New Town in the sun. Job opportunities in tourism and construction are attracting migrants from Haiti, the Dominican Republic and all over the TCI - to the detriment, it must be said, of the smaller islands in the territory.

Generally, though, the TCI are probably as close as you'll get to a tropical island paradise. That is, if you discount the food. This is not a place for the gourmet: local produce is rare. Most food - indeed, almost everything - has to be imported, and is not cheap. As in most of the rest of the Caribbean, no food was served to me which the cooks did not feel could be improved with tomato ketchup.

Nor are the TCI a refuge of

the muses. A neglected education system means that there are no indigenous writers, few artists or indeed many musicians - an absence of local culture which makes the TCI's survival as a political entity all the more remarkable.

Such shortcomings are compensated for by the people, whose contentment and friendliness are remarkable. "We are just blessed," said an islander on the beach. And he talked with not a trace of self-satisfaction or complacency.

Treasure islands: the Turks and Caicos' greatest assets are their azure seas and coral reefs, featuring some of the finest diving sites in the world
Photographs: J Henderson/Hutchinson Library

A train

A weekend trip on the oldest operational steam locomotive in the world costs around £100, including a night of "fun, food and luxury" at the Sariska Palace Hotel. The catch with this trip, which is aboard the *Fairy Queen*, is that you have to get to Delhi first. Find out when the next trip is planned at <http://www.icindia.com/fairy>, or call the International Tourist Bureau at New Delhi railway station on 11 373 4164.

A boat

May Day sees the start of the summer schedule on the ferry from John O'Groats to Burwick in Orkney. A day trip from John O'Groats costs £30; from Inverness (starting 1 June) the price is £40, including bus connections. The service is bookable through John O'Groats Ferries (01955 611553).



A plane

The telephone number for British Airways' new low-cost offshoot, Go, is carefully designed: after the 0845 prefix denoting a local-rate call, the next two digits are intended to look a bit like GO, before the 5-4-3-2-1 countdown familiar to older Manfred Mann fans. So the number comes out at 0845 60 54321.

A room

Accommodation within Britain for £2 per night is still possible, specifically at three camping barns in the West Pennines operated by

Lancashire Countryside Service. The barns, at Rivington, Darwen and Entwistle Reservoir, have no heating or lighting. You must book in advance by writing to the Great House Barn Information Centre, Rivington Lane, Horwich, Bolton BL6 7SB.

Details of low-cost accommodation elsewhere in the British Isles is contained in the *Independent Hostel Guide 1997*, itself a bargain at £3.95. Order through the Backpackers' Press, 2 Rockview Cottages, Mauldeth Bath, Derbyshire DE4 3PG.

A meal

"Perhaps the most important restaurant in recent Dublin history, the E&C first cracked the idea of serving spirited, capable food at good prices in an informal context. Dubs have had a love affair with it since day one. The specials of the day allow whoever is in the kitchen

to show their newest influences; the spicy chicken wings are legend, the soundtrack is fixed at mid-period Miles Davis, and you can't book." - A review of the Elephant and Castle restaurant in the new *Time Out Guide to Dublin* (£9.99).

A drink

Also in Dublin, the Old Jameson's Distillery, founded in 1780, is now offering tours to the public; the Irish prime minister will open it officially on Monday. It opens daily (except Good Friday and Christmas Day) 9.30am-5.30pm. Adults £5.50, students and OAPs £3, children £1.50. It is located close to (and signposted from) the Four Courts. Call 00 353 1 872 5566 for more details.

A week from now...

... Downe House, the former home of Charles Darwin, reopens in time for Easter. This handsome

English Heritage property has evolved to include an exhibition of the five-year voyage of HMS *Beagle*. You need to book tickets at least a day in advance, on 0870 603 0145.

A month from now...

... ski in May? According to Ski Scott Dunn (0181-767 0202), you could spend the next bank holiday on the slopes of Val d'Isère. A four-night trip from London City airport costs £399, including self-catering accommodation.

A year from now...

... the Earth Centre, between Rotherham and Doncaster, is due to open. Calling itself "the first in a new generation of visitor destinations for the 21st century", the former colliery is dedicated to the vision of a sustainable future. Call 01709 512000 for advance information.

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The wild waves of the west

For bracing walks on lonely, breathtakingly beautiful beaches and cliffs, Sue Wheat made for the western tip of Wales

Getting away from it all: that was what we wanted. So we hired a cottage for the weekend on the western tip of Wales. Arrangements were one thing, locating the place late on a Friday night was quite another. We found our cottage by a combination of luck and design. Careful map-reading helped us locate the tiny village of Rhodan-y-Brennan, just outside St David's. And while sitting in the car looking at a line drawing of the house we suddenly realised that we were mysteriously parked outside it. Almost on the stroke of midnight, we'd arrived.

The next day we all slept in till noon. Cottages seem to do that to you, especially those with no TV, radio or stereo. And no central heating. This meant that we nursed the wood burner in the lounge as you would a small child. We hardly left it alone for a second, scared that if we neglected it, it would slump into a slum. So we budded around it transfixed, making encouraging oohs and aahs as it flitted from flicker to fury.

Finally we levered ourselves into the afternoon sunshine. St David's was our first stop, two miles down the road. As it has a cathedral it is technically a city (although it was officially given this title only in 1995), but there are few bright lights here. No doubt in summer tourists swarm around Britain's most miniature city, but at this time of year it felt as though we had stumbled



Once more on to the beach: the windswept outlook from Newgale Sands

Photograph: Tom Pilsten

across a precious secret - particularly the 12th-century cathedral, made partly of local purple stone, and complete with an intricately latticed, Irish oak ceiling. St David himself is reputedly buried here, although recently questions have been asked as to whether the bones really are his.

A few steps across the tiny River Arun, which runs behind the cathedral, is the 14th-century Bishop's Palace. Rooks circle above the ruins, and a large, central grass quadrangle fringed by ruined buildings creates an enchanted walled garden. As we scrambled around exploring, my mobile phone squawked sacrilegiously; it shook me rudely back into the world of today.

The sun was shining bravely, but the wind was fighting its corner. We bought hats. If we were going to venture out on a coastal walk we had to be prepared, we were told by the man in the sportswear shop, who advised us to start our exploring at the lifeboat station. We might see seals there, he said, and we could walk along the famous coastal cliff walk.

The lifeboat station, marked as such on every map but signposted as St Justinian's Harbour, is two miles due west of the city. A ruined chapel, a weatherboard lifeboat station and a ticket hut for the boat trips that run in season are all that is there. I felt as if I'd been transported to the scene in

The French Lieutenant's Woman where Meryl Streep stands in a cloak looking soulfully out to sea (though the film's location was Lyme Regis in Dorset, rather than Wales). Dressed in flosses, trainers and strange hats, we hardly had the same grace, but the evocative atmosphere was there.

Across the water we saw the shadow of Ramsey Island, the destination for a host of pleasure trips in the summer. When we had asked about the tours in St David's we had received rather pitiful looks. Looking down on the sea bashing mercilessly at the rocks, we realised why. This was not jolly boating weather.

We managed a walk of a few hundred yards along the coastal path. The view across the bay was magnificent and the sun was warm, but the wind was winning. It pushed us into the cliff-side and swirled around our freshly covered ears. Fearing being brushed off the edge, we turned back, and deciding on a safer place to marvel at the sea view, we headed for Whitesand Bay. As we drove down the steep road towards it, we turned a bend and gasped at the huge white banks of froth beating at the bay. We had the beach to ourselves, so we stood in a line and looked out to sea, as tourists do, and watched the sun set behind the unreachable Ramsey Island.

There were better views to come, however, and over the weekend the "it-takes-your-breath-away" gasp became commonplace. At Solva, on the way to Haverfordwest, we walked from the Harbour House Hotel on the edge of the village and followed an inlet down to the sea. We reached a smooth, sandy beach at the mouth of the bay surrounded by huge, multi-coloured rocks, and clambered into vast caves lining the bay. We saw no other tourists, just a few local people walking their dogs.

The most stunning view was on that of Newgale Sands. This hit us between the eyes as we drove towards Haverfordwest. Here was a beach about a mile long with no one on it save a rider on a sleek brown horse, cantering down the whole length. We climbed over the shingle embankment which surrounds the beach and ran down to the sand. Faced with so much unspoilt space, it was hard to know what to do. My friends ran and circled the sandy strip, wheeling around like the rooks we'd seen at the Bishop's Palace. I walked, daunted by the vastness, and made my way up to the water's edge. The sea seemed to beckon us in. My courage shimmered on the verge of impetuosity - only mad dogs and tourists would even contemplate this. I pulled my new, too-big hat down over my ears and common sense took over: romanticism stopped just short of suicide by hypothermia.

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1764, 1774, 1784, 1794, 1804, 1814, 1824, 1834, 1844, 1854, 1864, 1874, 1884, 1894, 1904, 1914, 1924, 1934, 1944, 1954, 1964, 1974, 1984, 1994, 2004, 2014, 2024, 2034, 2044, 2054, 2064, 2074, 2084, 2094, 2104, 2114, 2124, 2134, 2144, 2154, 2164, 2174, 2184, 2194, 2204, 2214, 2224, 2234, 2244, 2254, 2264, 2274, 2284, 2294, 2304, 2314, 2324, 2334, 2344, 2354, 2364, 2374, 2384, 2394, 2404, 2414, 2424, 2434, 2444, 2454, 2464, 2474, 2484, 2494, 2504, 2514, 2524, 2534, 2544, 2554, 2564, 2574, 2584, 2594, 2604, 2614, 2624, 2634, 2644, 2654, 2664, 2674, 2684, 2694, 2704, 2714, 2724, 2734, 2744, 2754, 2764, 2774, 2784, 2794, 2804, 2814, 2824, 2834, 2844, 2854, 2864, 2874, 2884, 2894, 2904, 2914, 2924, 2934, 2944, 2954, 2964, 2974, 2984, 2994, 3004, 3014, 3024, 3034, 3044, 3054, 3064, 3074, 3084, 3094, 3104, 3114, 3124, 3134, 3144, 3154, 3164, 3174, 3184, 3194, 3204, 3214, 3224, 3234, 3244, 3254, 3264, 3274, 3284, 3294, 3304, 3314, 3324, 3334, 3344, 3354, 3364, 3374, 3384, 3394, 3404, 3414, 3424, 3434, 3444, 3454, 3464, 3474, 3484, 3494, 3504, 3514, 3524, 3534, 3544, 3554, 3564, 3574, 3584, 3594, 3604, 3614, 3624, 3634, 3644, 3654, 3664, 3674, 3684, 3694, 3704, 3714, 3724, 3734, 3744, 3754, 3764, 3774, 3784, 3794, 3804, 3814, 3824, 3834, 3844, 3854, 3864, 3874, 3884, 3894, 3904, 3914, 3924, 3934, 3944, 3954, 3964, 3974, 3984, 3994, 4004, 4014, 4024, 4034, 4044, 4054, 4064, 4074, 4084, 4094, 4104, 4114, 4124, 4134, 4144, 4154, 4164, 4174, 4184, 4194, 4204, 4214, 4224, 4234, 4244, 4254, 4264, 4274, 4284, 4294, 4304, 4314, 4324, 4334, 4344, 4354, 4364, 4374, 4384, 4394, 4404, 4414, 4424, 4434, 4444, 4454, 4464, 4474, 4484, 4494, 4504, 4514, 4524, 4534, 4544, 4554, 4564, 4574, 4584, 4594, 4604, 4614, 4624, 4634, 4644, 4654, 4664, 4674, 4684, 4694, 4704, 4714, 4724, 4734, 4744, 4754, 4764, 4774, 4784, 4794, 4804, 4814, 4824, 4834, 4844, 4854, 4864, 4874, 4884, 4894, 4904, 4914, 4924, 4934, 4944, 4954, 4964, 4974, 4984, 4994, 5004, 5014, 5024, 5034, 5044, 5054, 5064, 5074, 5084, 5094, 5104, 5114, 5124, 5134, 5144, 5154, 5164, 5174, 5184, 5194, 5204, 5214, 5224, 5234, 5244, 5254, 5264, 5274, 5284, 5294, 5304, 5314, 5324, 5334, 5344, 5354, 5364, 5374, 5384, 5394, 5404, 5414, 5424, 5434, 5444, 5454, 5464, 5474, 5484, 5494, 5504, 5514, 5524, 5534, 5544, 5554, 5564, 5574, 5584, 5594, 5604, 5614, 5624, 5634, 5644, 5654, 5664, 5674, 5684, 5694, 5704, 5714, 5724, 5734, 5744, 5754, 5764, 5774, 5784, 5794, 5804, 5814, 5824, 5834, 5844, 5854, 5864, 5874, 5884, 5894, 5904, 5914, 5924, 5934, 5944, 5954, 5964, 5974, 5984, 5994, 6004, 6014, 6024, 6034, 6044, 6054, 6064, 6074, 6084, 6094, 6104, 6114, 6124, 6134, 6144, 6154, 6164, 6174, 6184, 6194, 6204, 6214, 6224, 6234, 6244, 6254, 6264, 6274, 6284, 6294, 6304, 6314, 6324, 6334, 6344, 6354, 6364, 6374, 6384, 6394, 6404, 6414, 6424, 6434, 6444, 6454, 6464, 6474, 6484, 6494, 6504, 6514, 6524, 6534, 6544, 6554, 6564, 6574, 6584, 6594, 6604, 6614, 6624, 6634, 6644, 6654, 6664, 6674, 6684, 6694, 6704, 6714, 6724, 6734, 6744, 6754, 6764, 6774, 6784, 6794, 6804, 6814, 6824, 6834, 6844, 6854, 6864, 6874, 6884, 6894, 6904, 6914, 6924, 6934, 6944, 6954, 6964, 6974, 6984, 6994, 7004, 7014, 7024, 7034, 7044, 7054, 7064, 7074, 7084, 7094, 7104, 7114, 7124, 7134, 7144, 7154, 7164, 7174, 7184, 7194, 7204, 7214, 7224, 7234, 7244, 7254, 7264, 7274, 7284, 7294, 7304, 7314, 7324, 7334, 7344, 7354, 7364, 7374, 7384, 7394, 7404, 7414, 7424, 7434, 7444, 7454, 7464, 7474, 7484, 7494, 7504, 7514, 7524, 7534, 7544, 7554, 7564, 7574, 7584, 7594, 7604, 7614, 7624, 7634, 7644, 7654, 7664, 7674, 7684, 7694, 7704, 7714, 7724, 7734, 7744, 7754, 7764, 7774, 7784, 7794, 7804, 7814, 7824, 7834, 7844, 7854, 7864, 7874, 7884, 7894, 7904, 7914, 7924, 7934, 7944, 7954, 7964, 7974, 7984, 7994, 8004, 8014, 8024, 8034, 8044, 8054, 8064, 8074, 8084, 8094, 8104, 8114, 8124, 8134, 8144, 8154, 8164, 8174, 8184, 8194, 8204, 8214, 8224, 8234, 8244, 8254, 8264, 8274, 8284, 8294, 8304, 8314, 8324, 8334, 8344, 8354, 8364, 8374, 8384, 8394, 8404, 8414, 8424, 8434, 8444, 8454, 8464, 8474, 8484, 8494, 8504, 8514, 8524, 8534, 8544, 8554, 8564, 8574, 8584, 8594, 8604, 8614, 8624, 8634, 8644, 8654, 8664, 8674, 8684, 8694, 8704, 8714, 8724, 8734, 8744, 8754, 8764, 8774, 8784, 8794, 8804, 8814, 8824, 8834, 8844, 8854, 8864, 8874, 8884, 8894, 8904, 8914, 8924, 8934, 8944, 8954, 8964, 8974, 8984, 8994, 9004, 9014, 9024, 9034, 9044, 9054, 9064, 9074, 9084, 9094, 9104, 9114, 9124, 9134, 9144, 9154, 9164, 9174, 9184, 9194, 9204, 9214, 9224, 9234, 9244, 9254, 9264, 9274, 9284, 9294, 9304, 9314, 9324, 9334, 9344, 9354, 9364, 9374, 9384, 9394, 9404, 9414, 9424, 9434, 9444, 9454, 9464, 9474, 9484, 9494, 9504, 9514, 9524, 9534, 9544, 9554, 9564, 9574, 9584, 9594, 9604, 9614, 9624, 9634, 9644, 9654, 9664, 9674, 9684, 9694, 9704, 9714, 9724, 9734, 9744, 9754, 9764, 9774, 9784, 9794, 9804, 9814, 9824, 9834, 9844, 9854, 9864, 9874, 9884, 9894, 9904, 9914, 9924, 9934, 9944, 9954, 9964, 9974, 9984, 9994, 10004, 10014, 10024, 10034, 10044, 10054, 10064, 10074, 10084, 10094, 10104, 10114, 10124, 10134, 10144, 10154, 10164, 10174, 10184, 10194, 10204, 10214, 10224, 10234, 10244, 10254, 10264, 10274, 10284, 10294, 10304, 10314, 10324, 10334, 10344, 10354, 10364, 10374, 10384, 10394, 10404, 10414, 10424, 10434, 10444, 10454, 10464, 10474, 10484, 10494, 10504, 10514, 10524, 10534, 10544, 10554, 10564, 10574, 10584, 10594, 10604, 10614, 10624, 10634, 10644, 10654, 10664, 10674, 10684, 10694, 10704, 10714, 10724, 10734, 10744, 10754, 10764, 10774, 10784, 10794, 10804, 10814, 10824, 10834, 10844, 10854, 10864, 10874, 10884, 10894, 10904, 10914, 10924, 10934, 10944, 10954, 10964, 10974, 10984, 10994, 11004, 11014, 11024, 11034, 11044, 11054, 11064, 11074, 11084, 11094, 11104, 11114, 11124, 11134, 11144, 11154, 11164, 11174, 11184, 11194, 11204, 11214, 11224, 11234, 11244, 11254, 11264, 11274, 11284, 11294, 11304, 11314, 11324, 11334, 11344, 11354, 11364, 11374, 11384, 11394, 11404, 11414, 11424, 11434, 11444, 11454, 11464, 11474, 11484, 11494, 11504, 11514, 11524, 11534, 11544, 11554, 11564, 11574, 11584, 11594, 11604, 11614, 11624, 11634, 11644, 11654, 11664, 11674, 11684, 11694, 11704, 11714, 11724, 11734, 11744, 11754, 11764, 11774, 11784, 11794, 11804, 11814, 11824, 11834, 11844, 11854, 11864, 11874, 11884, 11894, 11904, 11914, 11924, 11934, 11944, 11954, 11964, 11974, 11984, 11994, 12004, 12014, 12024, 12034, 12044, 12054, 12064, 12074, 12084, 12094, 12104, 12114, 12124, 12134, 12144, 12154, 12164, 12174, 12184, 12194, 12204, 12214, 12224, 12234, 12244, 12254, 12264, 12274, 12284, 12294, 12304, 12314, 12324, 12334, 12344, 12354, 12364, 12374, 12384, 12394, 12404, 12414, 12424, 12434, 12444, 12454, 12464, 12474, 12484, 12494, 12504, 12514, 12524, 12534, 12544, 12554, 12564, 12574, 12584, 12594, 12604, 12614, 12624, 12634, 12644, 12654, 12664, 12674, 12684, 12694, 12704, 12714, 12724, 12734, 12744, 12754, 12764, 12774, 12784, 12794, 12804, 12814, 12824, 12834, 12844, 12854, 12864, 12874, 12884, 12894, 12904, 12914, 12924, 12934, 12944, 12954, 12964, 12974, 12984, 12994, 13004, 13014, 13024, 13034, 13044, 13054, 13064, 13074, 13084, 13094, 13104, 13114, 13124, 13134, 13144, 13154, 13164, 13174, 13184, 13194, 13204, 13214, 13224, 13234, 13244, 13254, 13264, 13274, 13284, 13294, 13304, 13314, 13324, 13334, 13344, 13354, 13364, 13374, 13384, 13394, 13404, 13414, 13424, 13434, 13444, 13454, 13464, 13474, 13484, 13494, 13504, 13514, 13524, 13534, 13544, 13554, 13564, 13574, 13584, 13594, 13604, 13614, 13624, 13634, 13644, 13654, 13664, 13674, 13684, 13694, 13704, 13714, 13724, 13734, 13744, 13754, 13764, 13774, 13784, 13794, 13804, 13814, 13824, 13834, 13844, 13854, 13864, 13874, 13884, 13894, 13904, 13914, 13924, 13934, 13944, 13954, 13964, 13974, 13984, 13994, 14004, 14014, 14024, 14034, 14044, 14054, 14064, 14074, 14084, 14094, 14104, 14114, 14124, 14134, 14144, 14154, 14164, 14174, 14184, 14194, 14204, 14214, 14224, 14234, 14244, 14254, 14264, 14274, 14284, 14294, 14304, 14314, 14324, 14334, 14344, 14354, 14364, 14374, 14384, 14394, 14404, 14414, 14424, 14434, 14444, 14454, 14464, 14474, 14484, 14494, 14504, 14514, 14524, 14534, 14544, 14554, 14564, 14574, 14584, 14594, 14604, 14614, 14624, 14634, 14644, 14654, 14664, 14674, 14684, 14694, 14704, 14714, 14724, 14734, 14744, 14754, 14764, 14774, 14784, 14794, 14804, 14814, 14824, 14834, 14844, 14854, 14864, 14874, 14884, 14894, 14904, 14914, 14924, 14934, 14944, 14954, 14964, 14974, 1



Celtic Italy: Portmeirion, the bizarre Italianate village built by Clough Williams-Ellis in the Twenties

Photograph: Richard Davies/PhotoWales

A mystical magical tour

North Wales: what a daft place to put a seaside resort. Llandudno is the kind of town where the first wisp of cloud in a clear blue sky introduces a torrential downpour.

Only when you look back on the esplanade from the Great Orme hills just west of town, do you begin to understand. Those perfect, curving terraces were built in an age when the Costa del Sol was not an option. Llandudno is a place where people kept their ankles covered.

And outside the warmest months of the year, it still is. I saw more sheep on the pavements than people. The resort waits until April to begin getting its kit off. The pier, the highlight of any British seaside resort, has been closed for repairs over the winter but is due to reopen at Easter; the century-old Great Orme tramway, which tumbles up the hills overlooking the town, opened for the season last weekend, while the cable car that glides up into those same hills is still thinking about it.

But, sadly, the wind will continue to blow cold off the sea until June at least and, personally, I advise trippers to north Wales to turn their backs on the shore. Get on the train instead, and try out the following easy circuit, arriving in England at the end of the day. Well, you'll arrive if you can work out the timetable. Welsh trains are so small and local that not many people know whether (or where) they run. The Conwy valley line, from Llandudno through Snowdonia to Blaenau, a clerk at Llandudno had no idea. A call to National Rail Enquiries tentatively cleared up the matter: I went to catch the train at 10.17am.

It turned out that on Sundays they run a substitute bus. "Not too many passengers Sundays," remarked the driver as I boarded. The two of us—the driver and I—were soon chugging alongside Conwy Bay, through heather-bound valleys under glowing skies. Edward's monstrous Conwy Castle came and went, and we began climbing into the wild heart of Snowdonia. The main stop in the middle of the park was Llanrwst, a dripping-wet village surrounded by fens and bracken and rushing streams, and the launch pad for 1,000 Snowdon treks.

For the best views of north Wales, says Jeremy Atiyah, put the coast behind you and head for the bleak hills

NOTES FROM THE WELSH OVERGROUND

On days when the trains are running, eight narrow-gauge railway networks gather together under the banner of "The Great Little Trains of Wales". A "Wanderer" ticket is valid for unlimited travel on any four days out of eight, price £28, or eight days out of 15, £38.

The line that Jeremy Atiyah missed out on performs a useful function as the missing link between the Mid and North Wales rail networks. The 3-mile Ffestiniog Railway (01766 512340) runs from the grown-up station at Blaenau

Ffestiniog to Porthmadog, the best place to change trains to rejoin BR at Minfordd. A one-way ticket is £6.40. On Sundays, it is impossible to complete the loop to or from the north coast because no trains run between Blaenau Ffestiniog and Llandudno.

Wales & West Railways operates most of the standard-gauge trains in Wales. It has rail pass deals, such as the Mid Wales Day Ranger, covering the lines from Wolverhampton to Pwllheli and Chester to Shrewsbury.

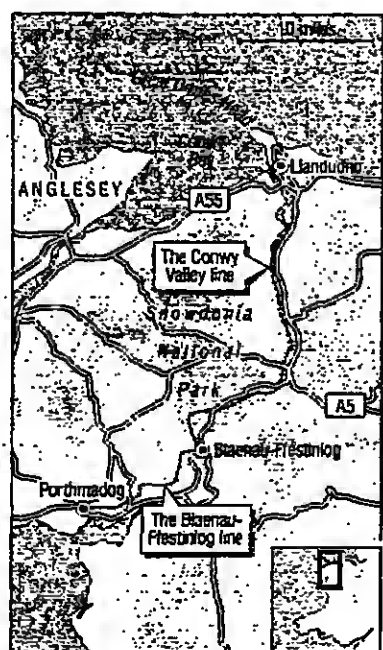
NOTES FROM THE WELSH UNDERGROUND

It's not as easy as it was to scratch beneath the surface of Wales, since a couple of mines closed to the public. The world's biggest slate mine in Blaenau Ffestiniog is no longer open to visitors; neither is the Gwynedd gold mine, the main source of Welsh gold, where visitors used to pan for the precious metal and keep what they found.

There are still a couple of opportunities for going underground. In the Rhondda valley, the Big Pit Mining Museum in Blaenafon (01495 790311) describes the story of the coal industry in Wales in the days when the country had one. It opens daily at 10am, with the last tour at 3.30pm: £5.50 adults, £3.75 for children (who must be at least five).

The Sygun copper mine in Beddgelert (01766 510100) describes the history and geology of mining the metal. It is located beside the A498 in Snowdonia, and opens daily from 10.30am to 4pm. Adults £4.50, children £3.

Simon Calder



Finally, we came down through the remote pastures of the Lledr valley to Blaenau. The barren, heaped-up rubble from a century and a half of slate-quarrying entirely surrounds this bright town. I think it would look a lot better under snow. Cottages in the high street go for £35,000.

What Blaenau does have, though, is a scenic railway. As well as being the terminus of the Conwy valley line, it is the jumping-off point for the narrow-gauge Blaenau-Ffestiniog line. Opened in 1836 to hug all that slate down to the sea, this descends the 640ft to Porthmadog in just 13 miles. These days it's a steam-engine job, having been restored for the benefit of tourists in 1982. Me? I took the bus (the train cost £12 one way) but I did have the pleasure of seeing the steam engine in a siding, with men in frock coats and top hats clambering over the engine.

The bus to Porthmadog incidentally also went via Portmeirion, a bizarre Italianate village built in the Twenties by the architect Clough Williams-Ellis. If you get off, you can see what Wales would have looked like had we remained a Roman colony. It is a one-hour downhill walk from here through trees to Porthmadog, where the first thing I heard was a pair of school kids abusing each other in Welsh. Later I found bus drivers trying and failing to express themselves in English. This was Wales all right. Having admired the boats in the harbour and the views over Snowdon, I set off on the next leg of my journey—along the Cambrian Line, down the west coast. It was then that I discovered just how unspoiled is the Cambrian coast. My nomination for the remotest station in Britain goes to Dovey Junction—a mere platform in the middle of nowhere.

The only trouble with doing the journey in this direction is that the wild coasts and magical valleys of Wales are soon replaced by the West Midlands. Go too fast, and before you know it you're in Birmingham. No danger of that for me. The day I travelled, a bewildering succession of substitute buses had been laid on to cope with a familiar Welsh problem—torrential rain had led to flooding on the line.

Lift up your eyes unto the hills...

Weekend walk: from Black Hill to Bright Vale.

Catherine Stebbings takes a hike around Llanthony Priory and the Vale of Ewyas

This spectacular walk is not for the faint-hearted, but it provides a great day out along the high ridge of Charwel-y-Fan and along the peaceful Vale of Ewyas, with a pub lunch and a wander around the imposing ruins of Llanthony Priory.

Start in the village of Capel-y-Ffin (about seven miles from Hay-on-Wye) at the enchanting whitewashed church of St Mary's. Glance inside to see the engraved glass window by Eric Gill. Here you read the words "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help", and sure enough, through the window the huge, heather-clad mountains rise dramatically heavenwards.

Leaving the churchyard, cross the road diagonally and follow the sign to the Grange Trekking Centre. Turning left to the riding centre, you pass the ruins of Llanthony Monastery. This was established by a Victorian churchman, Joseph Lyne, to restore the monastic tradition to the Church of England. He died before his dream was realised and the community closed in the Twenties. The remains of the monastery became home to the notorious commune founded by Eric Gill.

After the riding centre, follow the bridge path left up a stony track, keeping a small wood on your left. From here turn right towards the daunting ridge and follow the path, a swath of green that winds up the hill amid the rocks and heather. This is the only steep climb on the walk; if you lose the path, just keep scrambling upwards.

Once on the top, the path is easily recognisable; follow that to the summit, which is marked by a large cairn. Enjoy the views of the tiny patchwork of fields that sprawl along the valley to the north east. To the north west a huge reservoir is restrained by a massive dam, and there is a stretch of woodland running to the west.

Turning to the south east, follow the ridge along a well-trodden path. The raw ground cover of heather and whin-berry provides a perfect habitat for upland birds, so watch out for raven, merlin and grouse. Follow the ridge for about three miles, until you reach the trig point of Bel Mawr where, weather permitting, you may see the ruins of Llanthony Priory deep in the valley below. Ahead you will see the Sugar Loaf and the Skerrin, two distinctive hills that dominate the horizon. Follow the path as it begins to descend, until you reach another cairn at Bal-bach. Turn left down an obvious path towards Llanthony.

When the path narrows, take the right-hand fork and follow a steep, stony path beside the stream. Once you have passed from the stony hillside into pasture land, the way is well marked with signposts and yellow arrows. A series of stiles, with adjacent dog gates, helps you pick your way across the fields among grazing sheep.

You finally enter the village across a bridge beside a farmyard, welcomed by a chorus of guinea-fowl, howling dogs and inquisitive ponies. Cross the road and turn right towards the priory.

The Priory at Llanthony is said to date from the sixth century. The hermitage and church were consecrated in 1108, though much of the building

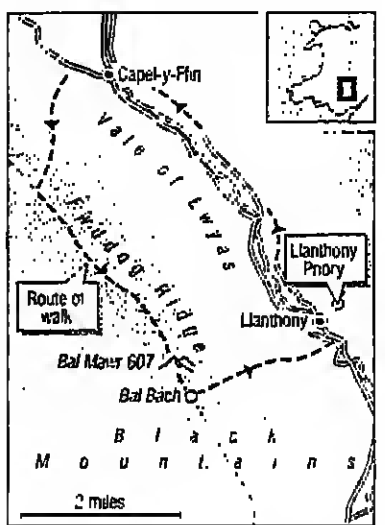
dates from the 13th century. The priory was abandoned after the dissolution of the monasteries, and today what remains of the lodgings and the one tower have been converted into a small hotel, nestled among the towering ruins of the former structure. Services are still held in the small Norman church of St David opposite the gates.

Just across the field from the priory is the Half Moon Inn, a welcome stop before turning homeward. Try their strongest brew, named Son of a Bitch.

Leaving the pub, turn left and then take the right-hand fork marked "no through road". This access road is quiet, and easy underfoot. The narrow lane winds up the valley alongside the river, offering idyllic glimpses of sheep and ponies grazing, and buzzards scouring the land for easy pickings.

The road comes to an end, but follow the track through a gate and continue through the fields and woods before joining another peaceful road. This gradually peters out into farm tracks beside various farmhouses.

The last farmhouse is The Vision, so called because one of its inhabitants saw a vision of the Virgin Mary above the house. It was made even more famous by Bruce Chatwin, who set his raw account of the lives of Welsh sheep farmers, *On the Black Hill*, here. Yet the rubbish-strewn streams, discarded oil



caans, broken-up cars and occasional dead sheep along the way work against any sentimental appreciation of the landscape.

Follow the track past The Vision until it crosses a little stream and another track.

Contrary to what the arrows indicate, turn left following the track down to the river, across a footbridge, until it joins the main road into Capel-y-Ffin a few hundred yards farther on.

Length: About eight miles, with a very steep ascent and descent. Time taken: three hours to push, two hours back, at a leisurely pace.

Ordnance Survey map: Landranger 161. Publications showing other walks in the area are: 'Walks from Llanthony Priory', National Park Office, 50p; and 'Pub Walks in the Brecon Beacons National Park', by Derek Phillips, £2.50. Both from Tourist Information Service, Aberystwyth (01873 857588).

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Such is the state of Britain's railways that travellers often find it cheaper and more convenient to rent a car, especially if several people can share it. If you're the type who can't go near a car without being overcome by environmental guilt, you will be pleased to hear about the Budget Rent-a-Car new gas-powered car—the Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) Ford Mondeo 1.8.

One place you may like to end your way to for an ecological family break is the Centre for Alternative Technology in Machynlleth, Powys, Wales. It is a living, working example of all things

there are plans for them to be available from offices around the country soon.

green—solar and wind power, organic farming, sustainable living—and with theatre and workshops for children. A self-build, low-energy house to visit, a wind pavilion and an adventure playground amongst its many attractions, it provides information for all ages on envi-

ronmental living. You can also go through a "transport maze" to learn more about the UK's transport dilemmas, tour the surrounding area using a free Green Guide to the Dyfi valley, and cycle through the newly launched Welsh cycle route.

Lon Las Cymru. CAT will give a 10 per cent discount to anyone arriving by gas-powered car.

Budget Rent-a-Car (0541 565656): Centre for Alternative Technology, Machynlleth, Powys, Wales (01654 702400).

Sue Wheat

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A high-contrast, black and white photograph showing the mast and rigging of a sailboat. A person is visible on the deck, leaning over the side. The image is characterized by extreme contrast, with deep blacks and bright whites, giving it a graphic, almost abstract quality. The mast is a prominent diagonal line, and the rigging consists of various ropes and pulleys. The person is positioned near the base of the mast, and the deck is visible below. The background is a bright, overexposed area, possibly the sky or water.

Photographs: Telegraph Colour Library

Thanks to Charles Wand-Tetley and Julian Pearson
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9/TRAVEL: BRITAIN

THE INDEPENDENT
SATURDAY 4 APRIL 1998

See performing cows and sheep; make friends with a chicken. Louise Duffield on an unusual family day out



Pork scratchings: each barn at the Farnfield centre holds a treat - from hatching chicks to tiny piglets

Photograph: John Voce

Down at the farm and a day out at the beach are two great attractions for children, and at the White Post Modern Farm Centre you can have both - all the more surprisingly since the farm centre is in the middle of landlocked Nottinghamshire.

The centre at Farnfield is a working farm. Alongside the traditional inhabitants - cows, sheep and pigs - are rheas, llamas, crayfish and deer. Children are encouraged to get to know the animals, and even have the chance to hold baby rabbits, guinea-pigs, chicks and ducklings. Watch out for parents who are keen to muscle in on this one.

Each barn holds a different treat. There's the popular hatching centre, where you can watch a chick take its first glimpse of the outside world, the farrowing shed full of newborn piglets, the night-time walk where owls stare as you saunter past, and the house with its alpine food, display of busy ants and unusual reptiles.

For children who fancy an alternative to animals, the beach barn offers a simple, covered area full of sand where youngsters can kick off their shoes and socks and have a good dig. Outside, a play area features

an unusual slide, sit-on tractors for children, plank races, a water tower and a straw barn. At certain times of year the farm's owner, Tim Clark, puts on a unique show using some of his sheep, goats and cows. Each animal comes on stage and makes its way to its own spot on a specially built pyramid, as Tim tells the audience a bit about that particular breed.

The visitors
Claire Milton, a teacher from Nottingham.

went with her son Alex, six, and daughter Briony, four.

Claire: It's paradise for children. There are a good four to five hours' entertainment here, with something of interest for everyone - for example, the beach barn is a good idea because children love playing in sand. Everything is labelled, and the information is excellent, though some of the signage looks a bit tired. Whoever wrote the signs has a good sense of humour. They even

talk about rabbits getting married and having babies, which uses language that children understand.

There is a lot of active involvement and good exposure to animals. I liked the show because it was informative. The animals seemed happy, well looked after and loved. When you see the hatching of the chicks, it's like a little miracle at work.

Alex: I would like to live here because it has got really good things that you can read

about as well. I want to come again. There was a really good show on, with cows, goats and sheep. We sang "Old MacDonald Had a Farm". The show was the best bit, when the animals came in one at a time.

I'm going to tell friends about the really good sand pit and the really good playground. I went on a big slide. It was as high as a very old oak tree. I liked the toys in the shop. I bought a tape measure.

Briony: I thought it was lovely. My

favourite things were the pigs, because they were little. I clapped at the show. The man got different animals in. I sat next to my mum and I had a little chick held in my hands. I thought it was wonderful. It didn't bite me - it liked me.

The deal
The White Post Modern Farm Centre is at Farnfield, Nottinghamshire. (01623 882977). Open daily, 10am-5pm weekdays, 10am-6pm weekends.

Admission: adults £3.95, children (4-16), senior citizens and people with special needs £2.95, under fours free.

Access: 95 per cent access for wheelchair users. Free wheelchair hire. Sign language guides by prior arrangement. Special needs parties catered for.

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And so to bed with the Duke

The stuff of ... antique linen bedclothes and French traditional quilts.
By Sally Staples

Antique linen sheets that once graced the beds of French nobles are the unusual speciality of Nicole Fabre, a vibrant Frenchwoman whose shop in London's King's Road draws a discerning clientele.

Many of the coarser antique linen sheets can be made into curtains and cushion covers, and some have been dyed the rich blue colour of "king's gold" - for *bleu* - in the time-honoured French way, using a special pastel paint.

But the finest linen, with hand-embroidered monograms and motifs, is bought to use as sheets. Some of these pieces date from 1860 and are sold singly at prices between £85 and £140, depending on the quality of the embroidery.

Upstairs, the shop has an eclectic collection of antique French furniture on display. But downstairs are shelves stacked full of linen and French toile quilts known as *indiennes* - the French equivalent of chintz. All date from around 1880 and are in a range of delicate colours, often favouring Provencal design.

"I go to France regularly to stock up, but I won't touch anything I don't like personally," says Nicole. "Everything I buy is hand-washed with soap and water, and laid out to dry on grass in the sun. If it is win-



ter, and there is a stain on the fabric, we use the ancient way of dealing with it. You must lay the material out to dry at night, when there is a full moon and a frost - and I promise you in the morning the stain will have vanished. People think it's an old wives' tale, but it works.

All the linen is passed through an old-fashioned mangle before making its way to Nicole's London shop. Here many people ask her advice on how to decorate their homes with a country farmhouse look. The coloured quilts can be used as wall hangings, or thrown casually over the back of a sofa.

Nicole's piece de resistance is not for sale.

This is a full set of magnificent bedclothes made in 1762 for the Duke of Orleans, brother to Louis XV of France. For this town of Orleans has made her an offer she cannot refuse - and so the royal bedlinen will shortly be on display there in a museum.

The shop also sells waste-paper baskets (£52 each) and replica 18th-century trays and tissue boxes (£25 each), covered in a range of pretty toile fabric.

Nicole Fabre is at 592 King's Road, London SW6 2DX (0171-384 3112). Her shop is open Monday to Friday, 10am-6pm, and Saturday, 11am-5pm.

The nectar of the Aztecs

The taste of ... Belgium.
Choosing chocolate for Easter? Go for the best, writes Nikki Spencer

The beverage "tchocolatl" was discovered centuries ago among the Aztecs by the Spaniard Hernando Cortés, but it did not immediately appeal because of its bitter taste. (Apparently the Spanish did not take kindly to the hot peppers the Aztecs added). The conquistadors learnt, however, to change the spicy drink into a smooth nectar by adding sugar, cinnamon, and honey or vanilla.

Chocolate arrived in Europe in about AD1520 where, after some initial opposition from the church (it was condemned as satanic in 1616), it found favour with the nobility. It was drunk in water-based liquid form for many years until milk and sugar were added in 1847, when the first bars of chocolate were also produced. Pralines, the filled chocolates for which the Belgians are now so famous, came soon afterwards, when the Swiss chocolate-maker Jean Neuhaus arrived in Brussels in 1857.

Visitors to Belgium today can not only tour the largest chocolate factory in the world (Callebaut, in Weize, just outside Brussels); they can also trace the history of chocolate at the Musée du Cacao et du Chocolat (766 Chaussée d'Alseberg, 1180 Brussels).

The reason the Belgians give for their success in the chocolate world is government legislation. In 1870, Belgium's strict health department defined chocolate as being a blend of cocoa beans and sugar. Only products which respected this particular definition could be sold as chocolate, and severe controls were strictly applied. The chocolate makers were therefore obliged to abandon cheap products and seek success in high quality.



Sweet creations: chocolate is not just for puddings, as Belgians' alternative concoctions show

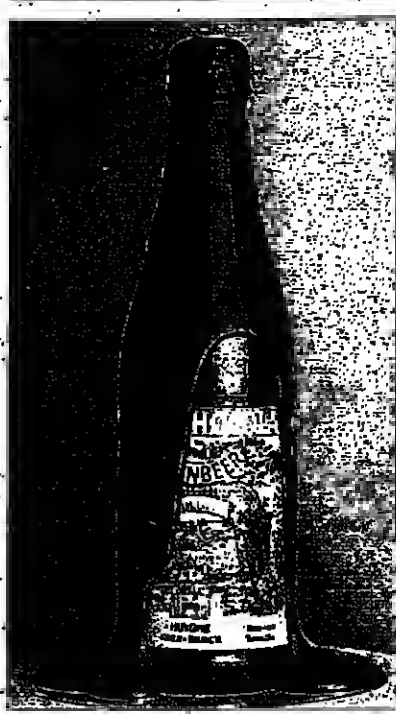
While these rich chocolates have always been popular in Belgium, they only really started to take off in the UK about 15 years ago, when exclusive brands became available in up-market stores such as Harrods and Selfridges. It's a sign of the popularity of Belgian chocolates that most supermarkets have now produced their own version, though these have been adapted for the British palate.

Chocolate with a difference

Increasingly, chocolate is not just for puddings. Asparagus with white chocolate sauce, confit of duck with dark chocolate and cherry sauce, and fillet of halibut poached in a white chocolate cream sauce, are on the menu at Belgio's two London restaurants from 8 to 14 April. Two chocolate-filled courses cost £12. If you need pudding after that, three courses cost £15. Belgio Central, 50 Earlham Street, London WC2 (0171-813 2233); Belgio Noord, 72 Chalk Farm Road, London NW1 (0171-267 0718).

Forget hot chocolate; what about something stronger? As well as the usual selection of eggs and cakes (and giant-sized hot cross buns), this Easter Asda has Cain Chocolate Ale, brewed with real chocolate, at £1.49 for 500ml.

How about basil-flavoured chocolate? The shop that is a temple for chocolate worshippers in London, Roccoco, 321 King's Road, London SW3 (0171-352 5857) is doing a roaring trade in what it calls Artisan Bars - 75g bars of dark chocolate, flavoured with chilli peppers, pink peppercorns, Earl Grey tea, etc (£2.50 each).



GAMES

AT THE SHALLOW END OF THE GENE POOL WILLIAM HARTSTON SURVEYS THIS YEAR'S DARWIN AWARDS

A report appeared on the Reuters news wires this week concerning a Toronto man who is suing a plastic surgeon for an operation that allegedly went wrong. The man, identified only as "ST", said that the surgeon had not told him that the penis-lengthening procedure he was undertaking involved attaching heavy weights to his penis after the surgery. Quite apart from being left with a scurred and deformed penis, ST complained of considerable embarrassment when, on one occasion, the weights came loose and fell through his trousers in a public place.

Had this all happened a few months earlier, it might well have been a late entrant for the 1997 Darwin Awards, which were announced last Wednesday - on April Fool's Day. As the official website for these Internet-based honours explains: "The Darwin Awards are given

usually posthumously, to the individuals who remove themselves from the gene pool in the most spectacular fashion. However, there is an exception to the requirement to die. If said individual does not die, however does render him/herself incapable of producing any children, they may be eligible for the dubious honour of receiving the award while still alive."

Last year, the award went to a lawyer who had plunged 34 floors to his death after crashing through a window pane when demonstrating how safe the glass was. This year, the winner was an Indian who, with a drinking companion, climbed into the tiger's enclosure at Calcutta zoo and tried to put a garland of marigolds around its neck. What seems to have made his death particularly Darwin-worthy was the fact that the tiger was named Shiva, after the Hindu god of destruction.

The runner-up was a Seattle robber who attempted to hold up a firearms shop when a uniformed, armed policeman was in the shop, together with several armed customers.

The awards have been widened this year to include a section for non-fatal stupidity. The 1997 Stupid Human Travesties award went to two illegal Fijian immigrants to New Zealand who stole five protective helmets and 400 puncture repair kits from a bicycle shop without making any plans for their escape. They had apparently arrived at the shop by taxi, but forgotten to ask the driver to wait. "What is the modern world coming to when a gang of thieves arrive at the place they are going to rob in a taxi?" Justice Morris asked at the Auckland High Court. "I despair of the future for our country when a group of louts like you lack the intelligence to take even basic

precautions to avoid detection."

The runners-up included a bank-robber who was last seen "hopping and jumping about" after a dye pack exploded in his pocket and burned a hole through his flies, and a man who was trying to siphon petrol out of a caravan but put his hose into the sewage tank by mistake.

There were 301 nominations for the awards, full details of which may be found on the website at: <http://www.officialdarwinawards.com>

In many cases, the heading of the nomination tells the whole story. "Leave the grenade at home if you go drinking" is sound enough advice, while "Suffocated in his own home with Scuba gear" clearly carries a similarly salutary message.

But perhaps the most tragic of all was the death of a young lady reported in "Oral sex underwater". It happened, appropriately enough, in Darwin, Australia.

PANDORA MELLY GAMES PEOPLE PLAY

Oliver Sherwood, 42, National Hunt trainer

I had one brother who was three years younger than me. He and I were brought up by my mother, and everything we did was horsey. We were very spoilt living with Mum in Warwickshire, as we had lots of ponies, and our rosettes were never-ending.

My brother wanted to be a professional show-jumper, so we used to put up little fences round the garden, and go round on foot. It wasn't so much show-jumping, more of a cross-country course. Mum had us build stone walls and this-and-that, and we'd time each other's rounds, each trying to be as quick as we could. Those were our little games in the garden, pretending that we were on horseback.

Mum was - and still is - very competitive, and we also had to practise doing the normal things you do on a horse at Pony Club - the bending and potato races. To get us to try and win, there were all sorts of carrots, such as the loser having to muck out the winner's pony.

Being three years older than my brother, obviously I had a slight advantage, so I'd be handicapped on time. But I used to cheat because I was bigger than him, and if he tried anything, I'd beat him up a bit. We weren't very close at that age, but we carried on playing the jumping game until we were about 16.

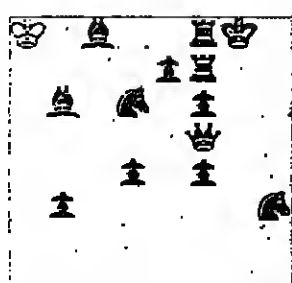
My children have all played it. My son is not so keen, but my eldest daughter, who's 13, used to play a lot, and my little daughter, who's 3½, loves it.

Going on to other games, I still play consequences, although liar dice is the game everyone plays in Lambourne. That's quite fun, and my friend and neighbour Kim Bailey is very good at it.

Oliver Sherwood trains *Him of Praise* (owner, M St Quinton), which will be running in the *Aintree Grand National* today, ridden by C Swan. Coverage on BBC TV at 3.45pm.

Simon Sherwood, Oliver's younger brother, partnered *Desert Orchid* to win the *Cheltenham Gold Cup* in 1989 (trainer, David Elsworth).

CHESS: WILLIAM HARTSTON



The annual championships of the Johannes Zukertort Memorial Home for Disturbed Grandmasters in Vienna are always looked forward to by all admirers of true art in chess. For the residents, saved by a lifetime of successful competitive endeavour, while away their final years in pursuit not of more empty victories, but only in search of beauty.

This year was adjudged one of their most successful events ever, with every game ending in a perfect draw. As the satisfied combatants said, there were no winners other than the game itself.

The diagram position is an excellent example of the artistry shown in the games.

When I saw the pieces on the board as shown, with Black to play, I felt certain that the perfect record of draws was about to end. Any move of the bishop on e8 delivers checkmate. I left the room to buy a cup of tea, and when I returned the pieces had been put away.

"Is the game over?" I asked one of the arbiters.

"Yes," he replied. "Draw." He could see I was flabbergasted, so added: "By stalemate." "Oh, I said. "You mean Black missed the mate and instead managed to stalemate White." "No," he replied calmly. "It was White who stalemated Black." I reset the pieces in the diagram position from memory and confirmed that we were indeed talking about the same game.

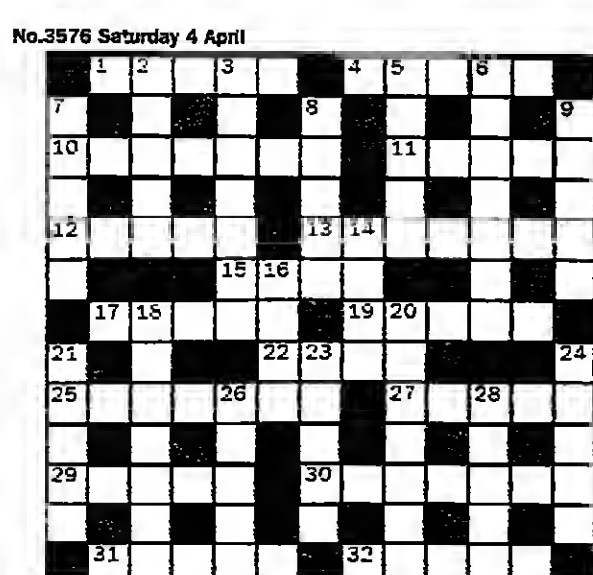
"Yes," said the arbiter. "It was Black's move here, and White delivered stalemate 34 moves later." Then he went away and left me to work it out.

You might like to see if you can do so too.

What, given up already? Okay, here's the answer. For the first 25 moves, White plays Kb8 and Ka8 while Black plays 1.f3, 2.f2, 3.f1=B, 4.Bd3, 5.Bb1, 6.Ba2, 7.Qb1, 8.f5, 9.f4, 10.f3, 11.f2, 12.f1=B, 13.Rf2, 14.Kf7, 15.Kc6, 16.Kd5, 17.Kc4, 18.Kc3, 19.Kb2, 20.Ka1, 21.Rh2, 22.Rf2, 23.Bf5, 24.Bc2, 25.d3. Play now continues: 26.Kh8 Bc3, 27.Kc7 e5, 28.Kxd6 Bc1, 29.Kc6 Rd2, 30.Kf5 e4, 31.Kg4 Be2+ 32.Kh5 e3, 33.Kg2 Bd1+ 34.Kf1 e2+ 35.Kc1 - White's 34th move from the diagram and Black is stalemated.

(Composed by Zdravko Maslar in 1988.)

CONCISE CROSSWORD



- | | |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| ACROSS | DOWN |
| 1 Middle (5) | 2 Nimble (5) |
| 4 Herb (5) | 3 Member of upper house (7) |
| 10 Smokestack (7) | 5 Taken on (5) |
| 11 Scoop (5) | 6 Mosque tower (7) |
| 12 Skillful (5) | 7 Fight (5) |
| 13 Neat (7) | 8 Mountainous region of Austria (5) |
| 15 Scandinavian capital (4) | 9 Gemstone (5) |
| 17 Foolish person (5) | 14 Old imperial power (4) |
| 19 Encounters (5) | 16 Rotate (4) |
| 22 Mountain goat (4) | 18 Cowboy film (7) |
| 25 Fate (7) | 20 Inspect (7) |
| 27 Separate (5) | 21 Saving (5) |
| 29 Estimate (5) | 23 Local regulation (2-3) |
| 30 Talent (7) | 24 Remains (5) |
| 31 Joint forces (5) | 26 Small picture (5) |
| 32 Celtic language (5) | 28 Wrong (5) |

Solution to yesterday's Concise Crossword:

ACROSS: 1 Turin, 4 Heeling, 10 Nebelhorn, 14 Aster, 16 Response, 17 Devo, 18 Ace, 19 Exodus, 21 Gully, 22 Big, 23 Sheik, 24 Enormous, 25 Acute, 26 Armchair, 27 Start, DOWN: 1 Chakra, 2 Abuse, 3 Elbow, 4 Unisex, 5 Unlucky, 7 Iceberg, 12 Epsilon, 13 Educator, 14 Asp, 15 Egg, 19 Ignore, 21 Thrice, 22 Normal, 23 Usury.

BRIDGE: ALAN HIRON

Game all; dealer West	
North	
♠ 8 7 2	
♥ 7 5 4 2	
♦ 10 2	
♣ A 5 4 3	
South	
♠ A Q J 10 9	
♥ A K	
♦ A 8 4 3	
♣ J 2	

Both North and South were a little optimistic in the bidding on this deal and an accurate defence led to a defeat of their game. Close analysis, however, suggests that there was a route to success, but that it would have been difficult to find at the table.

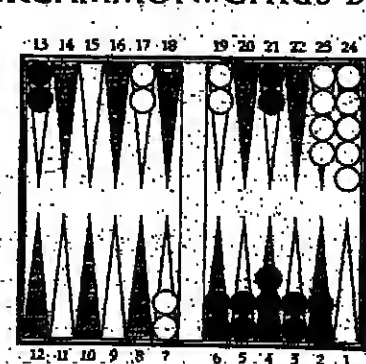
West opened 1NT, and after two passes South doubled. West and North were happy to pass, but East wisely re-treated to 2NT. With an awkward decision (he held undisclosed card values), South jumped to 3NT and on the strength of his three trumps, a doubleton and an ace, North went on to game. Against Four Spades, West made the good lead of a low trump.

After winning in hand, declarer followed with the ace and another diamond. If West had failed to unblock, he would have had to win the second diamond and would then have been badly placed, unable to lead a second trump with safety, and with South obviously threatening to ruff two diamonds in dummy.

So, after careful thought, West played ♦Q under the ace and let the next diamond run to East. Now a second trump lead held declarer to nine tricks.

It was well defended, but can you see (double-dummy) a route to success? Suppose declarer crosses to ♠A at trick two before leading a diamond from dummy. East must insert the nine (else South will play his eight) and West must unblock as before under the ace. Then a diamond back kills the defence, for if West plays low, South's ♦8 wins the fourth trick in the suit.

BACKGAMMON: CHRIS BRAY



Chessplayers are used to the concept of *zugzwang* - where the player whose turn it is would prefer not to move at all as any move will weaken his position. In backgammon, *zugzwang* is not uncommon as a player will often have timing problems and prefer to keep his position as it is.

The position above is an example of double *zugzwang*: whoever moves first will irreparably weaken his position. With Black on roll, his equity is approximately 0.38. With White on roll, Black's equity rises to 0.52. Black's ideal scenario would be that he could double in this position and then ask White to roll. In a money game with Black on roll he is not quite strong enough to double.

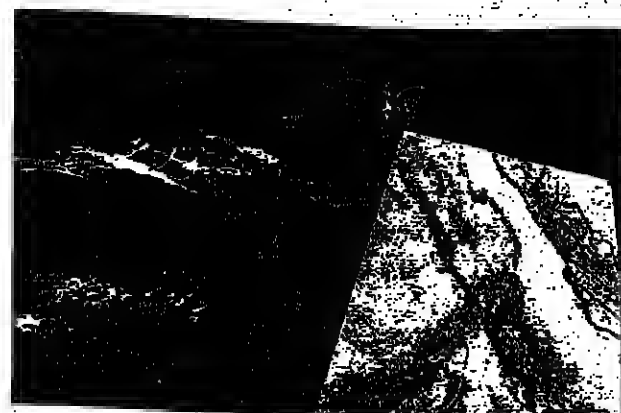
The position occurred in the Double Fives weekly tournament. In a match to seven points, Black trailed by three points to five. This match score is interesting. The trailing player should double if he has a good chance of winning a gammon. The leader needs only 20 per cent (rather than the normal 25 per cent) winning chances to take; provided there is not a huge gammon threat. After long thought, Julian Ferrelin, playing Black, doubled; and after even longer thought, The Doyen, playing White, dropped.

Both the double and the drop were correct. At 3-5 and with a reasonable gammon threat, this is an excellent pressure double. Although White will win 33 per cent of the game, this is offset by the number of gammons he loses when two or more of his men get closed out by Black. After all the arithmetic has been done, White's chances of winning the match are 59 per cent whether he takes or drops, so either option is acceptable.

This is an excellent example of how tournament and money play can differ. For money, Black should not yet double but in a match, Black should double and White can drop.



Faux pas: reality (right), and imitation (below) painted at Relics in Witney, Oxfordshire
Photographs: Brian Harris (right)/John Lawrence



Find your marbles

Making it: Catherine Stebbings tries her hand at marbling and other faux finishes



Siena marble, *vert de mer*, tortoiseshell, malachite, lapis lazuli: these paint effects may sound well beyond the average home decorator. But they're not – provided you have some good training – as I discovered on a one-day course at Relics, a delightful home decoration and restoration emporium in the market town of Witney, in Oxfordshire.

The shop itself is a treat. Here you can buy pretty much everything you may need for home decorating, including the softest badger-hair brushes, oak corbels, and a fine range of paints, varnishes, waxes and tints.

Ten of us settled into a charming little room at the back of the shop, where we met our tutor for the day, an interior designer, Carol Spode. She is a rising media star who has made appearances on TV shows such as *Our House* and *Good Morning with Anne*, and Nick, offering little gems of advice and displaying her flamboyant skills in specialist painting effects. By comparison, taking on a

bunch of amateurs was probably child's play. She seemed to fill the room with her enthusiasm, and we were soon painting small jewellery boxes in tortoiseshell effect.

For all that the results look complicated, this turned out to be a surprisingly easy exercise. You start by painting the top of the box gold, using shellac mixed with gold pigment powder, and paint the base in matt black emulsion. From then on you use artist's oil paints mixed with a little scumble (thinning medium) and white spirit, first painting over the gold with a mix of burnt umber and burnt sienna and then painting random "s" shapes over the top in burnt umber. After putting yellow ochre splodges in the curves of the "s" shapes, you outline the shapes roughly with a little black, and soften these gently with a brush. Finally you make "v" shapes with burnt sienna at either end of the fuzzy shapes that remain, and soften the whole painting until you like the look of it.

The first attempts to follow these instructions are unlikely to be perfect. This is where the course comes in. Once you have been shown the various materials, how they work together, how to apply them, how to soften the effect and which colour combinations work, a certain confidence sets in. Carol allowed us to see each error as a step in the learning process, which left us all feeling pleased with our results, and confident about dabbling with tortoiseshell again.

The participants were an eclectic mixture of amateurs and professional designers looking for extra skills. But the course suited us all. As Carol says, "Anyone could do this course; you don't even have to be artistic. It is a little more unusual than most courses but generally we are using familiar techniques in a more flamboyant way. I just make it accessible."

It was this slightly unorthodox approach that made the course so appealing

and enlightening. Allie Ridley, a local artist, described Relics as her lifeline.

"I have done lots of courses here," she said. "I really enjoy learning fun techniques such as using feathers to stroke on paint, scraping it away with the back of a pen or splatting paint with mops. All this can be translated into my artwork, for a different effect."

Marbling was perhaps the one effect where real skill helped. The method itself is not complicated, but the placing of veins, the softening of colours and the depth of work are demanding. Malcolm Lax, a retired sign-writer, produced a spectacular illusion of Siena marble which showed all the detail, colour differentiations and unique qualities of the real thing. He admitted to having practised for a few weeks; his work looked like that of an expert.

For me the most spectacular effect was the *vert de mer*. Here green and blue were softened into a black background and then

a shock of white was sent through it by sawing a well-loaded feather across the surface. Equally impressive was the finely lined malachite which, thanks to the use of a small piece of corrugated cardboard dragged through the paint in circular motions, looked remarkably like the real thing.

We finished with the lapis lazuli effect, which seemed sufficiently straightforward to practise at home with the children. On to a light blue, water-based, eggshell base colour, you lay a runny mix of scumble and ultramarine. Then you randomly splodge dots of black scumble mixture on to it. The next step is frottage (the one technical term we used, basically meaning "splodge with newspaper").

Having done that, you draw a river in the thick paint and sprinkle a dusting of gold pigment powder into it. Frottage again, and sprinkle a little more gold powder across the surface. The result has a depth of

great for covering little boxes for presents.

The day at Relics was not only helpful, but also fun and entertaining. And there were welcome extras: a good sandwich lunch was provided, and we were supplied with endless cups of tea by the saintly Laura, who also spent the day washing our brushes.

Relics, 35 Bridge Street, Witney, Oxon OX8 6DA (01993 704611), offers a wide range of courses including decorative furniture painting, cane-smithing, broken colour work and stencilling. Carol Spode is running another 'spectacular effects: marbling and faux finishes' course on Friday 15 May. The cost is £75 and booking is essential. All courses include a sandwich lunch. The shop provides an extensive mail-order service with almost everything you may need to achieve decorative effects and the restoration of furniture, including paints from Annie Sloan, Farrow and Ball, Old Village and Colourman.

Pots of good karma when India comes to town

Our preconceptions of goods from India are about to undergo a radical change, writes Gina Cowen, as an exhibition of exquisite crafts arrives in this country

"Hand-made in India" – that may sound all too familiar, the subtext being that the item is in fact mass produced, and is on special offer somewhere off Brick Lane. But be prepared to think again. An exhibition opening on Thursday at the Crafts Council Gallery in London is set to challenge assumptions of Indian craftsmanship. Here you'll see a wide display of contemporary crafts, including embroidered, woven and printed textiles, and objects thrown, carved and beaten in terracotta, wood, stone and metal – even artefacts reincarnated from rubbish.

"We tend to think of Indian crafts either as intricate wonders from, say, the Mughal period, reposing in the solemn galleries of the V&A, or as bright, mirrored trinkets on market stalls – and they currently have a reputation for poor quality," says Louise Taylor, head of exhibitions at the Crafts Council, and one of the curators of this particular show. "This show opens our eyes to a vibrant culture of craft that is modern, sophisticated and relevant." None of the works is likely to have been seen in a shop or market in this country, and they are vastly different from the stuff that fills so many home decoration catalogues and style-vibe shelves – created in Croydon, beaten out in Bangalore.

Hand-made in India will show work by Indians, significantly for an Indian market: temple lamps cast in brass; an *urli* (a ritual vessel in bell metal, from Kerala); a grass chair from Orissa (using design and technology from the Indian Institute of Technology in Kanpur); double ikat weavings from Andhra Pradesh; *ujrak* printing and embroidery from Kutch, Gujarat; iron-work figures; bamboo-mattresses; terracotta cooking-pots; sikki baskets; even stencils for temple floor decoration, from Mathura.

Krishna's birthplace, in Uttar Pradesh. The quality of craftsmanship is superb – particularly notable in Shaan Zaveri's granite plates inspired by traditional thalis (large tray plates) with fused granite of different colours; in Absher Hussain's magnificent wooden bowl with a carved rim (pictured); and, more humorously, in the recycled creations of Vinod Kumar Sharma.

Locally, Sharma is perhaps best known for making a man's suit from recycled newspaper. For this exhibition he has created multicoloured mats from sweet wrappings, and lamps, from perforated tins, that are reminiscent of highly carved traditional Indian screens. The Indian flair for recycling is almost certainly born from a mixture of stark necessity and a karmic acceptance that all comes round in the end: birth, death, rebirth – Coca-Cola tin, rubbish dump, chandelier. Two years ago the Crafts Council staged a highly successful exhibition, *Re-*

cycled, which displayed such items as a chandelier featuring a bicycle wheel and hanging bottles by Sophie Chandler, and chest of drawers made out of used sardine cans, by Michael Marriott.

Marriott, who is well known among the style set (*Elle Deco*, *Blueprint*, 100% Design, Milan Furniture Fair) is one of the designers (along with Katherine Skellon) of *Hand-made in India*. He follows the dictum that "good design is all about cunning use of resources, whatever they are". In designing the exhibition, the cunning would appear to have been in making a space that reveals the exhibits not only as works of art but also as objects of everyday use. The design had to be highly flexible, since this is a touring show, with emphasis on the fact that these are items made for sale, and to be used.

"Rather than offering a set route round a gallery, this will be something you can wander through on a number of different routes," says Marriott.

Be prepared for a mix of Southall market and South Kensington museum. There are more than 300 works on display, and the price range is wide – from £10 to £1,000. In an inverted form of hire purchase, you can pay now and pick up your item at the end of the exhibition, which will tour the country over the next 18 months.

'Hand-made in India' opens on 9 April and runs to 28 June at the Crafts Council Gallery, 44 Pentonville Road, London N1 (0171-278 7700); from 11 July to 8 August at the Angel Row Gallery in Nottingham (0115 947 6334); and from 5 September to 31 October in Leicester at the City Gallery (0116 254 0595) and Leicester Museum (0116 253 4100). For further venues, call the Crafts Council (0171-278 7700).

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The bloom and bust syndrome

When grouping plants together, writes Anna Pavord, it's easy to go for the grand slam, but take care: a sparkling spring could give way to a sere and sullen summer garden

My mother-in-law is a hataholic. She has more hats than anyone I know. When you open her cupboards, rows of the things gaze serenely out at you: veiled hats for funerals; wide-brimmed hats for weddings; hats for shopping in her village, which are subtly different from hats for shopping in her local town. She has hats for going to church in and hats for coffee mornings (including a wicked navy blue number she bought especially to go to a fundraiser for the lifeboats). Egged on by our children, she can always find a reason for another outing, another hat.

Occasionally, hatted out, she comes with me to the garden centre, where she wanders through the plants with the same exploratory caution that I feel in her natural territory. I'd gone in there for gravel, to top-dress the tulips in their pots. But a fabulous pulmonaria 'Blue Ensign' was signalling wildly from a bench, and I had to have it.

"You've got one of those," said my mother-in-law accusingly at the check-out desk. "More than one. I saw them this morning." I explained the difference between this particular pulmonaria and my other seven (though I didn't admit to that many), but knew that I'd never be able to use those same words to her again about her hat habit. We are conspirators.

The pulmonaria has particularly rich blue flowers, though the leaves are plain dark green, unspotted. Having brought it home, we had to find it the right companions. My mother-in-law liked that hit. Like her hats, plants are not bought just for their own sake, but because they will complement something we already have - or intend to get.

'Blue Ensign' went in next to a spread of magenta-coloured 'Wanda' primroses and a bergenia, whose big, spoon-shaped leaves are a rich shade of claret. The patch will not have much to carry it through the summer, but there is space to put in some of my favourite tobacco plants, the tall, white-flowered 'Fragrant Cloud' (Thompson & Morgan, £1.19).

This is the decision you have to make when you are grouping plants together in the garden. Are you going for the grand slam, with everything coming out together? Or are you planting for continuity, so that whenever you look at a particular spot, something is happening? With a little forethought, you can have the best of both worlds, for

there are some plants, notably hellebores and euphorbias, that contribute to the garden all the year round. If you include one or two of these "bankers" in your plant groups, you will be more than half-way to success.

The best bankers have good foliage, because in the end it is leaves, not flowers, that make your garden feel rich, abundant and well-furnished. So in any group, there ought to be one plant (like the bergenia) which will continue to have point when its flowers have finished.

The perennial wallflower 'Bowles Mauve' is a generous plant, flowering over a long period. That is a useful trait, as a plant it does not have character. At this time of the year, you can team it with sweet-smelling, pale cream narcissus. That will look fresh and spring-like, but will not be a sustaining diet. If you add *Geranium palustre* to the group, it immediately has better prospects for the future.

The same thinking might apply to a group of the yellow narcissus 'Quail', interplanted with deep blue hyacinths. They both look - and smell - magnificent. But bulbs put themselves neatly away when they have finished their growth cycle. Without some backdrop, such as the handsome dark evergreen *Helleborus foetidus*, there would soon be an empty gap where the narcissus and hyacinths are performing so magically at the moment.

I think spring should be grand slam time, and bulbs achieve those kinds of effects better than any other kind of plant. But while you are enjoying these in-your-face displays, you need always to be thinking "What happens afterwards?"

This spring, *Thilpa baalini* 'Bronze Charm' interplanted with deep blue de Caen anemones has been better than ever before. But though I feel that nothing will give me more pleasure on that patch than these two do, it nevertheless has to have something happening on it for the rest of the year, when both anemone and tulip have dived underground.

Pinks, I think, will be the answer. They like the same hot, well-drained conditions as the tulips and they will not get too rampant. I'll probably go for some sheets of the red *Dianthus deltoideus*.

The same problem will occur where

the very early dwarf magenta tulip, *T. pulchella*, is growing with patches of blue *Anemone blanda*. That show will finish soon, but they have as company the snaky, ground-hugging twirls of grey-leaved *Euphorbia myrsinites*. This is flowering at the moment, with vivid, lime-green heads (good with magenta), so the patch is technically grand slam rather than successional in its planting. But the euphorbia is a good all-round plant, evergreen (or rather, evergrey), intriguing and sculptural. Even on its own, it would make the spot worth visiting. If I can remember to pop in a few summer-flowering Spanish daisies (*Erigeron karvinskianus* 'Profusion'), it will be even better.

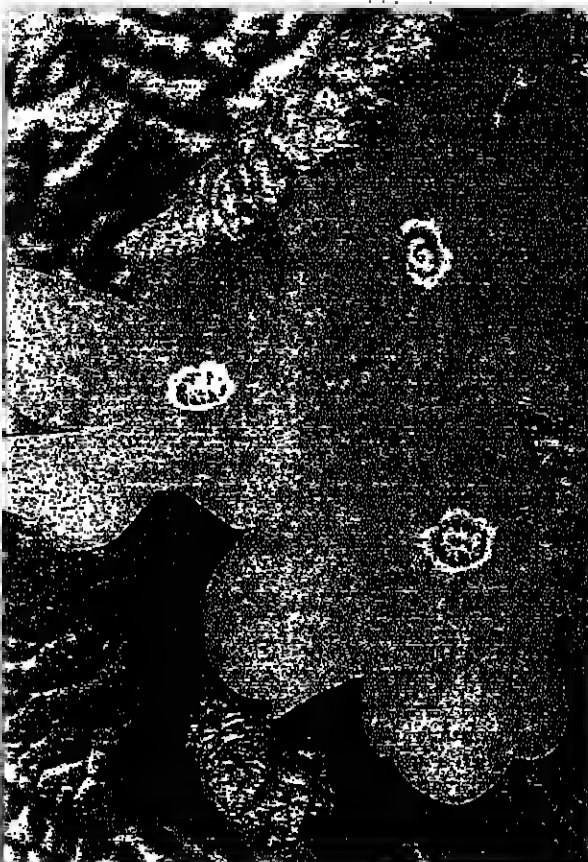
Lilies follow on well from early bulbs, having the same strengths and weaknesses (phenomenal flowers, useless foliage) and I've just taken delivery of some 'Citronella' lilies to plant amongst blue and white hyacinths on the bank.

The hyacinths are there to complement the variegated, blue-flowered brunnera, a clean, simple combination of spring-flowering plants.

But later on, the brunnera grows coarse and unprepossessing. It is surrounded by the tall blue geranium 'Mrs Kendall Clark' and the similar (though shorter) 'Johnson's Blue'. Their flowers are good, but the leaves of the three plants are similarly matt in texture. The group needs to be kicked into orbit. I hope 'Citronella', with its elegant, recurved flowers, will be the answer.

Ferns, like spurge, are reliable bankers, provided you can give them the cool conditions they like. For the past couple of months, snowflakes have been flowering on our bank, tall graceful clumps of green with dangling white snowdrop heads on the ends of the stems. They are interplanted with more brunnera, the plain, green-leaved kind, so in essence, this is a spring planting.

But with them is a 'Bevis' fern, one of the most beautiful of the polystichums, with long, arching fronds, and it is this, together with the greyish hosta 'Krossa Regal' that will give that part of the bank a new life later in the season. I don't want this time of year ever to finish, but in the very small part of my mind that is rational, I know it will. Making sure there is more still to come softens the blow.



Good companions: clockwise from top, 'Polystichum setiferum', 'Pulmonaria blue ensign', 'Primula Wanda's Red'. Photographs: Howard Rice (above and top); Sunniva Harte/GPI.

CUTTINGS

Sarah Raven, queen of the cutting garden, is offering more courses this year on growing and arranging cut flowers. On Monday 3 August, she will tell you all you need to know about preparing, planting and maintaining a modest cutting garden no more than 10ft by 15ft (cost £125). More ambitious two- and three-day courses are planned for 13-15 July and 20-21 July. For the first time, Ms Raven is also selling seeds for those who want to plant flowers for cutting: sunflowers,

cornflowers, marigolds, dill (for its foliage), snapdragons, poppies and many others. All seeds cost £1.50 a packet. For a copy of the list (and details of courses) send a stamped, addressed envelope (11cm x 22cm) to Sarah Raven's Cutting Garden, Peveril Hill Farm, Brighton, Robertsbridge, East Sussex TN32 5HP.

'Gardens Illustrated' celebrates its fifth birthday with the April issue (£3.50) just published. It's got a

suitably Easterish cover - a clutch of blueish duck eggs - photographed in the garden of the writer Francine Raymond, near Bury St Edmunds in Suffolk. The magazine is celebrating its anniversary by increasing publication from six issues a year to 10. Read about Bob Brown's nursery, Cotswold Flowers, or follow Roy Lancaster's trail through the prolific family of ceanothus. To take out a subscription (£35 for 10 issues), call 01454 202515 or fax: 01454 620 080.

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WEEKEND WORK

Water plants growing in pots. This is a job that, though obvious in summer, we often do not think of during spring. In some areas there has been no rain to speak of for a couple of weeks, but plenty of wind, which dries out plants even faster than sun.

Plant early potatoes in mild areas. The ground, at least, is far more workable than it was in its sodden state during February. If necessary, protect young top growth when it emerges, with a floating fleece of spun polypropylene. This is useful stuff. You can cover carrots with it to keep off carrot fly, or spread it over young courgette plants like a duvet to keep them warm at night. The stuff I use is called Agrilan. It has been wrapping up my agaves on cold nights through the winter and seems to have brought them through safely. They are under cover, but unheated cover.

Plant a row of early peas. You need a lot to get a decent meal from them, but the taste reminds you that the frozen pea is no more than an approximation of the real thing. I have sown 'Douce Provence' (Marshall, £1.04), which is sweeter than 'Feltham First'. It grows to only 2ft, so needs minimum staking. Cover the drills with netting against birds. Last year I found the rooks were adept at tweaking out peas just after they had germinated.

Tie in wall shrubs such as ceanothus and climbing roses, and walk-trained fruit trees such as apricot and peach.

Nip off the dead heads of daffodils before they waste their resources in producing seed. Cut down the top growth of any perennials, such as campanula and Michachina daisy, that got forgotten in the autumn. Watch where you put your feet. In reaching for my own forgotten campanula I trod straight on to the newly emerging, salmon-pink shoots of *Paeonia mlokosewitschii*. Catastrophe.

Anna Pavord

A scent of London's green past

The Herb Garden at Shoreditch is a reminder of the East End's roots, says Patricia Cleveland-Peck

The East End of London conjures up images of urban decay and traffic pollution rather than orchards and gardens, yet in the past Hackney, Hoxton and Shoreditch were important horticultural areas. In the late 16th century there was a botanical garden in Homerton that included plants collected by Mathias de Lobel of Lobelia fame. Pepps mentions a visit to an East End garden in 1666 in which oranges were growing: at Hackney House in 1700 a deer park was created. The good soil and plentiful water supply made the area a mecca for market gardens. In 1990 Gerard wrote in his *Herbal*: "The small Turnep which growth by Hackney... are the best that ever I tasted".

Plant nurseries abounded. There was even one specialising in vines. The most influential was the nursery that Conrad Loddiges established in Mare Street in 1774. Here he developed the largest hothouse in the world; it contained a tropical rainforest of exotic plants, some of which he supplied to Kew and Chatsworth.

The area was also rich in pleasure gardens. Pepps records a trip out of London (which stank in summer) with his wife "to take the air to Hackney; there light and play at shuffleboard, eat cream and good cherries; and so with good refreshment home".

The Eagle pleasure gardens in City Road (celebrated in the song "Pop goes the weasel") survived into the 19th century, but the spread of the metropolis and the consequent increase in land prices meant that more and more green spaces fell to speculative builders. With development came the problems of pollution. The modern image of the East End emerged.

Yet the ghosts of the old gardeners lingered about the place too insistently for the love of green things to be eradicated. East End backyards and window boxes continued to flower. Even today the private gardens of Albion Square (a winner in last year's London Squares Competition) are open under the National Gardens Scheme in June.

At the same time, vestiges of the green past have survived in the parks, Victoria Park, Springfield Park and Clissold Park. If no longer in their heyday, provide acres of open space for the community, while small pockets such as Allen's Garden in Bethune Road and St Thomas's churchyard are half-vegetable, secret gardens in which people can escape for a while from urban concerns.

Today, the place in which the green and tranquil spirit of the old East End is most strongly captured must be the Herb Garden at the Geffrye Museum. Situated in a walled enclosure beside the old almshouses that make up this friendly museum, this garden is not, in fact, old. It was created in 1991 on a derelict site in the hope that it would serve as a sort of "spiritual heir to the legacy of horticultural interest and botanical delights once common in Shoreditch".

Within the brick walls, four square beds containing aromatic herbs such as lavender, southernwood, thyme, bergamot, mints and rosemary surround a central well-head

designed by the local ceramicist Kate Malone. Benches overhung with sweet-smelling climbers and roses stand against the walls, while between them are beds planted with different types of herbs: dye plants, culinary herbs, herbs for bees, herbs for medicinal purposes, cosmetic herbs—even household herbs such as fleabane, which was once used to kill fleas, and pennyroyal, whose strong scent deterred ants. A further area is given over to cosmetic herbs, and there is a bed devoted to salad herbs, reminding us that in Tudor times a "saller" was not the floppy lettuce leaf, tired tomato and chunk of

cucumber with which we are often fobbed off: it could feature as many as 50 different plants.

The educational value of this garden is incalculable in an area where few people have the opportunity to experience the natural world at first hand. "Local people think of it as theirs," says Christine Lalumia, who initiated the project. "Some even bring us plants".

In the gentler way it teaches a great deal, underlining man's continuing reliance on plant power. The museum itself is laid out as a series of domestic interiors dating from

1600 to 1950, and the garden shows what an important role herbs played in the past, providing the major source materials for flavourings, medicine and cosmetics.

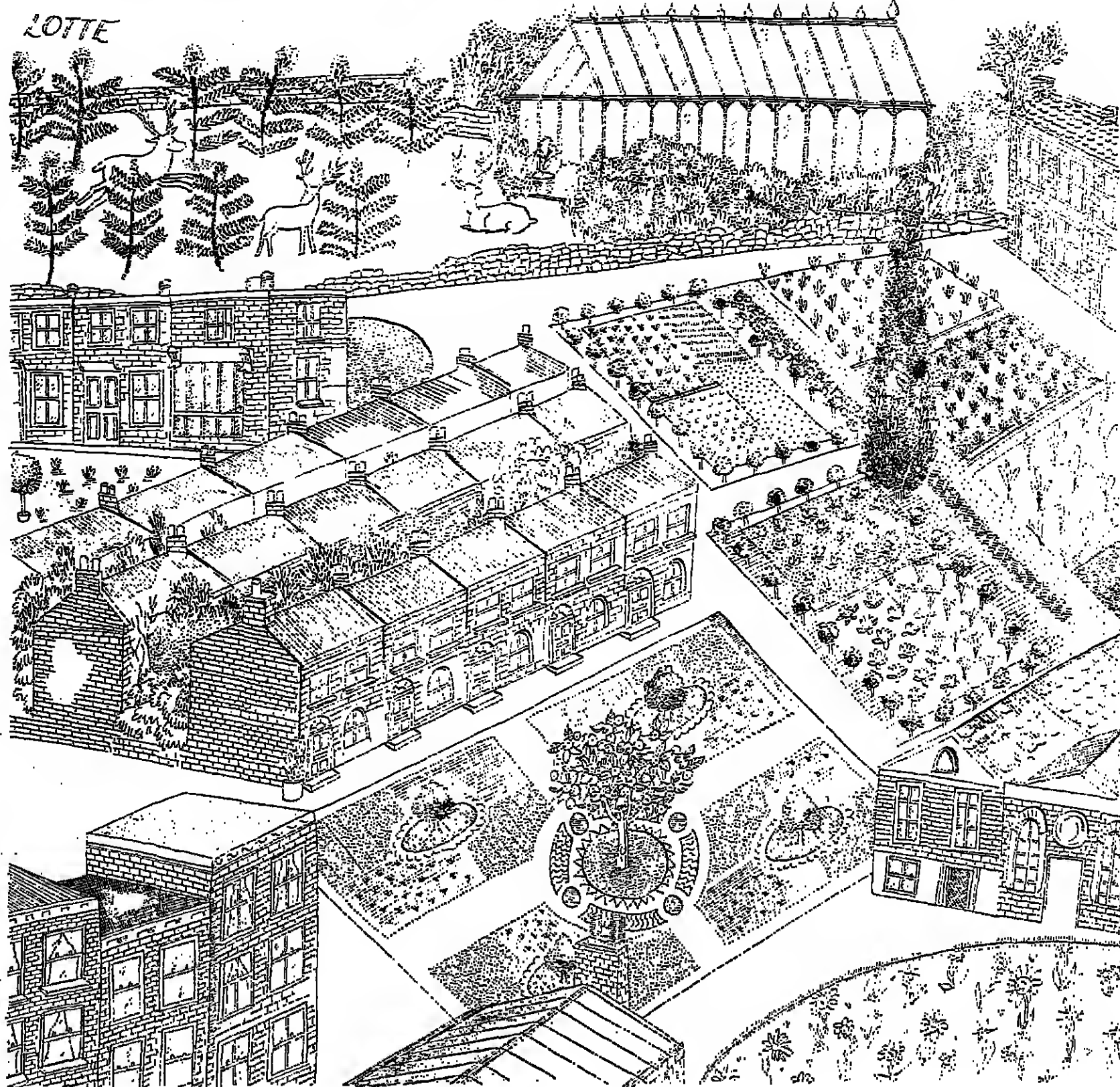
It becomes apparent, however, that the chemical and pharmaceutical advances of this century have by no means banished herbs. Indeed a backlash against synthetic drugs and preservatives has revived interest in green medicine, aromatherapy and all things herbal.

Most of the East End gardens have long been buried under pavements, but their spiritual heir, the Herb Garden at the Geffrye, continues to offer visitors a welcome. "It is

such a beautiful, safe and thoughtful place," says Christine Lalumia. "It's much used and much loved."

Indeed, to sit in this peaceful garden listening to the birds and bees, surrounded by the soft colours of the plants and breathing in their sweet and aromatic scents, is to feel at one with London's green past and full of hope for its future.

The Herb Garden at the Geffrye Museum, Kingsland Road E2 (0171-739 9893), is open Tuesday to Sunday, 10am-5pm; Sunday 2pm-5pm. Admission is free.



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So just how good is Tiger Woods?

Golf was shaken by his Masters triumph a year ago, but less stirred by his displays in the following majors. As the Tiger prepares to defend his title in Augusta next week, Andy Farrell assesses his unusual talent

IT MAY not be quite the remember-where-you-were category of earth-shattering moments but, for the record, it was at 5.30 on the afternoon of Friday April 13 1997 that Tiger Woods took the lead in the US Masters for the first time. He did so with an eagle at the par-five 13th hole and never relinquished his lead. Nor ever will, according to some.

"I think we are all in trouble at the Masters," said Colin Montgomerie, recalling Woods' record 12-stroke victory at Augusta National last year. "If Tiger plays to 60 per cent of his ability, he's going to win again. If he puts well, he'll win."

Woods, then aged 21 and in his first major championship as a professional, caused great swathes of the Augusta record book to be rewritten: he set 20 new records, including the lowest-ever score of 18 under par, 270, and becoming the youngest winner, and tied six others.

His victory was referred to variously as "the greatest performance ever seen in a golf major", "a win for the ages" and "the tournament of the century". Yet for someone proclaimed as the greatest golfer ever, Woods currently shares with George Archer, Sandy Lyle and Ian Woosnam the slightly obscure distinction of making his only top-10 finish at Augusta a victory.

This question remains: did Woods play golf from another solar system last year, or just take advantage of a course that is perfectly set up for a player of his prodigious power off the tee? The scary theory is the latter but, as usual, elements of both apply.

Woods must be given credit, too, for things. Firstly, for peaking for a particular week. Something only Jack Nicklaus, and to a lesser extent in recent times Nick Faldo, achieved consistently. It is a concept alien to the majority of tour players, who just hope for two or three hot weeks a year but have no idea when they might arrive, and certainly not when the expectations are as high as they were on Woods.

Secondly, Woods turned round a potentially disastrous start, taking 40, four over, to the turn on the first day, to come home in six-under 30. He played the last 63 holes in 22 under. What he managed to avoid during all four rounds was a three-putt. On Augusta's speedily and undulating greens - the flat parts measure 13 on the stimpmeter, the highest rating of the year - such a feat is the key to victory. The last four winners have had one three-putt between them.

But the key to putting well at Augusta is usually precise mid-iron play of the quality produced by Faldo, Bernhard Langer and Jose Maria Olazabal. Woods' advantage, thanks

to his length off the tee, was that he never needed more than a seven-iron into a par four.

"You can't say it was just my putting or my driving, you have to explain it as a whole package," Woods said. "I made a lot of putts and my speed control was perfect, but the majority of my putts were uphill because I was able to control my irons into the greens. Why was I able to do that? Because I had short irons in. And that was because I drove the ball great."

"They need to put in Tiger tees," Jesper Parnevik said at the time. Augusta needed to be toughened up, was the cry. But the guardians of the Masters have resisted growing any rough or putting in extra bunkers at 320 yards.

After all, the scoring record was only broken by one shot and had stood since Nicklaus set it in 1965. Nicklaus's record, equalled by Ray Floyd in 1976, was the longest-standing scoring mark in the four majors. "You want to make it harder?" Parnevik says now. "I thought it was pretty tough."

Nor can Woods' triumph be described as the most dominant of all time. In slightly differing measures of a winner's performance versus the rest of the field, Floyd at the Masters in 1976 and Arnold Palmer at the

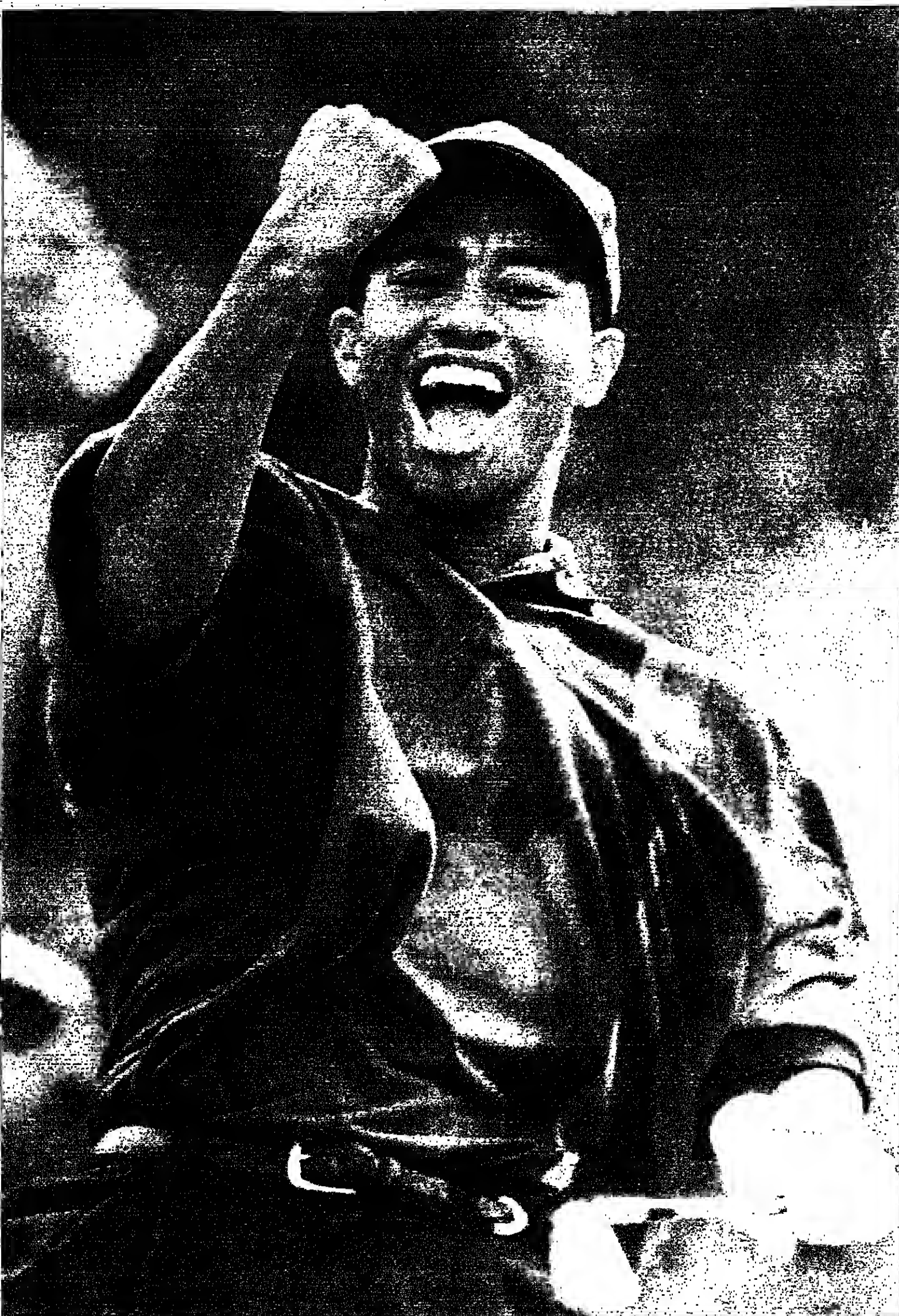
Open Championship in 1962 come out on top. Then there was Ben Hogan's mastery in each of his triple crown victories at the Masters, US Open and the Open in 1953.

Woods never recaptured his Augusta form in the other majors, finishing 19th at the US Open, 24th at the Open and 29th at the USPGA. One win in five matches was also a poor return in the Ryder Cup at Valderrama. "Very simply, I hit the ball better at the Masters," Woods said. "You have to hit the ball well and keep the ball in play and I wasn't able to do that at the other majors."

His last win of 1997 came in July, but after seven victories in his first 10 months as a professional - the first couple of which were entailed gaining his US Tour card in the first place - Woods can be forgiven for feeling slightly burned out. He was also learning to cope with Tigermania.

Endorsements worth \$100m (£60m), including Nike and American Express, made Woods the most visible golfer ever. The Masters win brought controversies when he declined an invitation to join President Clinton at a Jackie Robinson memorial event and followed Fuzzy Zoeller's "fried chicken and collard greens" remarks. For his champion's dinner, Woods has included cheeseburgers, chickenburgers, fries and strawberry and vanilla shakes.

"People assume that since



Punching his weight: Tiger Woods in full cry on his way to winning the US Masters title with a record score in Augusta last year. Photograph: AP

I've been in the spotlight for a while that I know how to handle all this but I'm still learning," Woods admitted. "The hardest part has been that the public doesn't want to hear now good I hit a five-iron."

"They want to know what I do off the course. The tabloids, some of the magazines, they've become a little intrusive. I can't do anything in public without them looking for an angle. That's been more difficult than I thought it would be. And I think that's wrong. I've had people call into radio stations saying where I was and the stations repeat it like it's fact."

"I would like the public to know me as me, but not to know what I do in my personal life. It's hard to have that balance, but that's what I want."

Impossible, more like it. Woods has stopped giving one-on-one interviews after GQ magazine repeated some of his racially insensitive jokes and his relationship with the American media has become strained. Woods added: "If somebody gets to know me, the way I see it they can write what they want. But until they get to know me, they shouldn't be taking shots."

Of course, no one gets the chance to get to know Tiger. At a day with a dozen American golf writers to try and mend some bridges last

December, the bughar of Woods only committing to tournaments on the Friday before came up. "You know, if you committed two weeks before, you'd get a better deal with the airlines," one reporter said to lighten the mood. "That's not a problem," Woods replied. "I know. It's a joke, Tiger," the reporter said.

Woods has, however, returned in 1998 better than a

year ago. He has only won once, at the Johnnie Walker Classic in Thailand. But he has been in contention every time he has played, something he was not a year ago, apart from the Players' Championship where he had an equally low-key week 12 months ago.

"Overall, it's a better package this year," Woods said. "I am controlling my distances and fighting the ball better. It's

How the young Master ranks

- Tiger Woods won three of his first 10 tournaments as a professional and seven in his first 10 months.
- He was Rookie of the Year in America in 1996 despite turning pro only at the end of August.
- He reached \$1m (£600,000) in earnings on the US Tour quicker than anyone else (nine tournaments) and at a younger age (21 years and 14 days).
- He won four times on the US Tour last year, becoming the first player to earn over \$2m in a single season. He became the youngest player to top the world rankings in June.
- This year he has finished second, third, second, ninth, 13th and 35th on the US Tour and won the Johnnie Walker Classic.
- After a year and a half, he is 70th on the US Tour's career money list with \$3,447,413, one place below Lee Trevino.

...and how he banks

- He is ranked sixth on the Forbes magazine list of biggest earners in sport in 1997 with \$26.1m (£15.6m) for the year. The next golfer on the list was Greg Norman in 11th place, one spot ahead of Arnold Palmer, 46 years Tiger's senior. He was second to table-topper Michael Jordan in endorsements alone.
- He turned professional in August 1996 with contracts worth \$40m (£24m) from Nike and \$23m (£13.7m) from Titleist. Also handed \$7m (£4.2m) worth of stock in the All Star Cafe chain, a subsidiary of Planet Hollywood.
- After the Masters he added deals with American Express and Rolex, and was recently signed up by breakfast cereal Wheaties.
- In all, Woods' contracts sum to over \$100m (£60m). Told Hughes Horton, his manager at the International Management Group: "We're a great team because we are both the best in the world at what we do."

much more consistent." Only two men, Nicklaus in '66 and Faldo in '90, have successfully defended at Augusta, but it is something that Woods is not asked whether he expects to win this year, but whether he thinks he will break the scoring record again. "I really don't know. I'm just going to give it my all." The last line is the emphatic one: "I just want to get a victory."

Dangerous smiling. I'm afraid you'll have to go off for that, son



MIKE ROWBOTTOM

ON A RED CARD FROM THE REFEREE IN THE SKY

I HAVE witnessed some memorable contests - but there is a special place in my heart for one which took place far from any recognised sporting arena.

It happened last July at Munich Airport, the day after I had reported on Britain's victory in the European Cup for athletics. The first inkling of anything out of the ordinary, as far as I and my fellow passengers bound for Stansted were concerned, came as we waited in the bus which was to take us to our plane.

Everybody in the passenger lounge had come through, but the bus remained stationary. The reason soon became apparent, as a number of unusual individuals strolled out to complete the party. Their dress code was informal - combat trousers, leather jackets, wraparound shades.

The hair colours ranged from cropped black to day-glo green. The last person to make his jaunt way on made his mates look like Young Conservatives.

He was small, with hair dyed green-yellow at the sides, and a brown and yellow plait down the centre. There was an intensity about him which struck a faint but not immediately recognisable chord in my memory.

Was that nose jewellery? Yes. And tongue jewellery? Of course, the mad bloke from The Prodigy, looked like a devil with horns on the Top of the Pops video... Firestarter... What's his name...?

The name was provided by a stage whisper from a goggle-eyed teenager standing nearby. "That's Keith Flint," he said to his friend. "That's The Prodigy."

The reference seemed lost on the businessman who stared

fiercely at the techno superstars over his copy of *Frankfurter Allgemeine*. We were indeed late. And we were about to get later.

I found myself seated one place in front of Mr Flint, with two of the other group members across the aisle. As we awaited take-off, a man whom I subsequently discovered to be from *Rolling Stone* magazine began interviewing one of them, who interspersed brief replies with lengthy stares out of the window.

From behind, I heard the quiet but unmistakable voice of Keith Prodigy - as he is invariably known in the magazines my eight-year-old daughter has begun to read.

"Did you see that guard on the way through? Yeah? He gave me... a dangerous smile..."

His comment did not seem to be addressed to anyone in particular. But he was clearly

taken with his final image, and began to sing it to himself with a series of experimental emphases. "He gave me a... DANGEROUS smile... He gave me a dangerous SMILE..."

One or two passengers turned their heads. One or two stared fixedly ahead of them, the same thought running through their heads. "Take off... take off... take off..."

But the plane had not shifted and now the steward - a Scotsman no bigger than Keith Prodigy himself - was making his way primly down the aisle towards the dyed and pierced one.

"Are you going to be all right, sir?" he enquired. "What?" "I just wondered if you were going to be all right on the plane, sir. Because you seem a little... hyper." The reply was unintelligible, but it had the effect of sending the steward back

up to the cockpit. Air UK steward O Keith Prodigy 1.

The interview across the way continued. The green-haired band member yawned and opened a novel. And that little, whimsical voice continued. "He gave me a dangerous smile... he gave me... a DANGEROUS SMILE-YUL..."

Still the plane stood. Then, in the distance, there came the sound of sirens. Two policemen, both armed with sub-machine guns, came aboard. One stared fixedly down the aisle, then slid his face out of view.

They were as low-key about the whole thing as people hearing machine-guns can be. But the steward was outraged. "He insulted me," exclaimed the frenzied, blazered person, pointing at the dyed, pierced person. "He told me to f-off. No one tells me to f-off. I don't have

to take that. I want him off. OFF!" If Air UK stewards had been issued with red cards, he would have brandished one at that moment. Instead, he pointed one trembling finger at the door.

The other band members took Keith's part. "Leave it out!" "I don't believe this!" "This isn't fair, right?"

I ventured the opinion that our man with the nose jewellery had done nothing outrageous, and that the plane would and should have taken off quarter of an hour earlier had the steward not taken it upon himself to create a confrontation.

The trembling finger turned on me. "You didn't have to put up with what I had to put up with!" he shouted. "You weren't the one who was told to f-off!"

The machine-gunned, uniformed ones began to take what I felt was an unhealthy interest in our discussion, and I decided, quite swiftly, to shut up. There was no doubt about what the final score was going to be in this particular tourney.

Despite the band manager's pleas, and despite the startlingly mild protests of the one of the tabloids called "Wild Man" - "This isn't fair, this is really unfair" - the diminutive singer was marched off the plane under armed guard. Air UK steward 2, Keith Prodigy gone.

The British Airport Authorities went one better when we finally reached Stansted. Not two, but three armed police detained the rest of the band on board until everyone else had left. It was just as well - one of them had taken off his shoes on the flight over, and another had been drinking tomato juice laced with Worcester Sauce.

Suny ready to step from the shadows

Richard Edmondson expects last year's Grand National runner-up to take over the leading role

THEY used to duck witches and pile brushwood at the feet of martyrs for the sort of heresy that has been doing the rounds before Grand National 1998.

Several folk, some of them quite learned in the sport, have actually had the temerity to say this year's marathon over spruce walls is not much of a race. Sacrilege indeed.

There are always those who think the race was ruined by the trimming of the fences. These turf versions of the guillotine hags seemed to be happy only when Aintree was smoking at the end of battle with piles of dead horses for decoration. Yes, the obstacles have been modified, but then so has legislation on bear-baiting and nobody is complaining about that.

For the meancers who believe there is no longer an Aintree factor the betting market makes unhealthy reading. Rough Quest, Suny Bay and Samlee, all of whom have completed voyages around this course, are at the forefront of the betting.

More pertinent is the suggestion that the old race might be a little light on class this year. In recent times, illumination has been provided by an animal coming on from a storming effort in the Cheltenham Gold Cup to run here. That option is not available today. In fact, it is the prolonged contemplation of this year's outstanding Cheltenham Festival that has delayed the embarkation of the Liverpool publicity bandwagon.

In addition, there is nothing even vaguely fancied in the betting which won't last race. This absence of outstanding recent form means that the old warhorse Rough Quest is likely to start favourite, even though the only race he has won since victory here two years ago was over hurdles at Folkestone. All this does not mean that jockeys or spectators are in store for a dull afternoon. The mini-cameras that will be attached, Grand Prix-style, to riders' helmets will replay that evidence for us.

Today's may not be a contest of the highest calibre, but then the Grand National is not meant to be. It's a handicap for a start, and the whole endeavour is about survival. It doesn't matter how quickly you get round the daunting obstacles as long as you do it. After all, there is no-one with a stopwatch at the foot of Everest to send you on your way.

Rough Quest undoubtedly transported better form coming into this race two years ago, when he won after finishing second in the Gold Cup. At Cheltenham last month he fell. He is up in the weights from his glory year and is one of the oldest in the field so he hardly represents great value. Yet, as he always appears a better beast when the daffodil trumpets are out, he cannot be ignored.

The soft ground should be in his favour, though against Avro Anson, who ran quite well last



Ultimate Quest: The Grand National favourite, Rough Quest, in the solitude of the North Downs near his Dorking stable before the tumult of Aintree today

Photograph: Robert Hallam

Friday, but that was on the Flat at Doncaster, which, in terms of preparation for today's encounter, was like going for a shower as practice for a cross-Channel swim.

Of the many horses out of the handicap, most interest is generated by Samlee and Him Of Praise. There will be some sorry figures tonight at the White Lion in the Warwickshire village of Bulkington should the former succeed. The regulars own him.

Mass intoxication is not out of the question as Samlee knows what it is like to cross these fences successfully, having collected the Becher Chase here in November. Richard Dunwoody goes for his third win in the race.

If the animal-rights army send a battalion today, one focus for their attention would be Him Of Praise, whose preparation has included chasing Basil Brush with the hounds. Another leading jockey and a man who does not have many Nationals left in him, Charlie Swan, takes the ride. Him Of Praise has schooled over mock Aintree fences at Lambourn this week, though there is nothing false about his form, on which he should beat both Earth Summit and Nahthen Lad.

The champion jockey, Tony McCoy, partners the one horse in western Europe he cannot

seem to master, Challenger Du Luc. The gelding's class is undoubted, but he is increasingly loath to use it as the most notable member of the turf's care in the community programme.

Scott Banks too has quality about him, or at least he used to. The nine-year-old was a smart chaser two years ago until someone shut the lid on his ability. He is still not an old horse, however, he stays as long as you like and is too big a price in this field. Back him for a place.

The one for the win money, though, is the horse that finished second last year on unsuitably hard going. It is going to take a real yomper to succeed this afternoon and SUNY BAY (nap 3.45) fits that vital criterion.

The nine-year-old had an unusual preparation for this event. In the Cheltenham Gold Cup the grey almost suffered death by a thousand cuts when he dropped his hind legs in a couple of fences and returned with wounds interwoven across his rear. Phil Sharp, Suny Bay's lad, has spent many hours removing splinters from the injuries.

Sharp was the man who stayed behind after the bomb warnings a year ago, when he feared that he might be picking more devastating shrapnel out of the many horses in his care. The lad was the hero of Aintree 1997. Now it is his horse's turn.

How to place a bet without embarrassment

BETTING - everyone's doing it these days. A lottery ticket every Wednesday and Saturday, and maybe the odd scratch card in between. And yet, when it comes to the local bookmaker's shop, it might as well be an obscure corner of an ancient map marked "Here be dragons" as far as many people are concerned.

The Lottery may not be much fun, and what little thrill it holds rarely lasts past the first four balls, but at least it is easy. Betting on the nags, by contrast, is probably difficult and potentially embarrassing. Not so. In truth, a punt on the horses is all

Greg Wood guides the once-a-year punter through the mysteries of the betting shop

too easy, and the very fact that it is not a mindless, random transaction also makes it considerably more satisfying.

There are no more than five fairly simple decisions which need to be taken. First, which horse do you want to back? Second, how much do you want to risk? Third, do you want a straightforward win bet, or would you rather go each-way and get a return if your selection is in the first four home? Fourth, are you going to take a

price? And finally, are you paying the betting tax up front (an easy one, this, since the answer should always be yes).

Steps one and two are up to you. Step three is the one which can be fraught with confusion, since an each-way bet is, in fact, two separate bets. The first is to win, the second to finish in the places, so a £1 each-way bet will cost £2. If your horse finishes second, third or fourth, the win bet is obviously a loser, but the second wager is paid at a quarter

of the odds for a win (for instance, at 5-1 about a 20-1 chance, returning £5). If, however, it comes first, then the win bet is successful too, adding, in this example, another £21 to the return.

Whether to take the price on offer is one of those Sod's Law decisions, but as a general rule it pays to shop around wherever possible and take the best price you can find (see page 18).

Finally, once you are happy with your total stake, add on the tax at nine per cent (most slips have a handy ready-reckoner on the back in case your maths is rusty). Hand over the grand to-

tal, and retire to watch the race.

There are only two other points to remember. Wear old clothes for your visit to the bookie, or at least an outfit that needs washing, since even a fairly brief visit will leave them reeking of fag smoke. (Alternatively, go early, before the fog builds up). And if there is an old chap in the corner muttering to himself, on no account allow him to exhale in your direction. Follow all these simple rules, and your trip to the bookies should be interesting, pleasant and, hopefully, an experience you may care to repeat.

Take the Rough route for a second National success

Suny Bay: Second last year on much faster going to Lord Gyllene under a light weight but faces a stiffer task at the top of the handicap this time. Should like the easier ground.

Rough Quest: The 1996 National winner uncharacteristically fell in the Gold Cup last time but came out of the race unscathed. He is reported to be fit and well and looks likely to go off as favourite.

Challenger Du Luc: An enigmatic horse who does not seem to relish a struggle and may not last out this trip of four and a half miles. Banjo: Has not shown enough worthwhile form this season to figure.

Scott Banks: The horse and the stable are way out of form. Earth Summit: As game as they come and has proven stamina for a slog in the mud having won the Scottish and Welsh Nationals. Every chance of making the frame.

Avro Anson: Ran disappointingly at Haydock and would be unsuited by soft ground. Has to improve dramatically.

Nahthen Lad: Represents the Jenny Pitman stable and stays all day. Will be putting his best foot forward at the finish - if he does not get detached.

Dun Belle: Has good form against Dorans Pride but ran very poorly last time and I have doubts about this one completing the course.

General Crack: Has not sparked this season. Ciel De Brion: A French raider who was fourth in the Hennessy Gold Cup but does not look good enough here.

The former National Hunt jockey Steve Smith Eccles (right) gives a runner-by runner analysis of the Grand National



Court Melody: This one picked up two big prizes this winter and has form over the course. Has an each-way chance if his last outing is discounted.

Go Universal: It would be an outstanding training performance if this horse won first time out. Come to think of it, it would be a miracle.

Celtic Abbey: The trainer is in good form - the horse is not. Him Of Praise: He has had an excellent season in winning four times from six starts but needs plenty of encouragement from the saddle. Stays well and likes the mud and should run a big race.

Into The Red: This OAP is over the hill at the age of 14. St Mellion Fairway: This year's form does not put him in the frame.

What A Hand: Not good enough.

Samlee: Although 10lb out of the handicap this tough, consistent individual stays well and can make the frame.

Gimme Five: I will give you 10 if this wins.

Greenhill Tare Away: I would not like to be riding this one. Stormracker: Unlikely to run. Yeoman Warrior: Inconsistent but did finish second in last year's John Hughes Trophy over the National fences.

and will stay the trip. A long way out of the handicap but could run well.

Hillwalk: No chance.

Joe White: First run of the season - who is kidding who? Diwali Dancer: I rode him over hurdles but would not partner him over these giant obstacles. Do Rightly: Do rightly - and forget it.

Killeshim: Stays all day but at a slow pace. Fabricator: Not a prayer. Pashtor: Has had problems and will do well to complete. Dams: Very little chance.

Radical Choice: His last run was in a novice chase so he will be lucky to get round.

Choisty: Ex-point-to-pointer who faces a daunting task.

Griffins Bar: Fell here over these fences on Thursday and has not got the form to figure.

Maple Dancer: Has not completed in his last three outings.

Winter Belle: Connections are expecting a lot from a horse that carries 2st overweight. Decyborg: Should stay at home.

The Grand National.

With luck, we'll be seeing you twice today.

THE MARTELL GRAND NATIONAL

4m 4f. Handicap Chase. Aintree. 3.45pm. Live on BBC.

6/1 Rough Quest	66/1 Radical Choice
9/1 Him Of Praise	66/1 What A Hand
9/1 Suny Bay	100/1 Decyborg
9/1 Earth Summit	100/1 Go Universal
9/1 Samlee	100/1 Into The Red
11/1 Challenger Du Luc	100/1 Pashtor
16/1 Dun Belle	100/1 Winter Belle
16/1 Nahthen Lad	100/1 Yeoman Warrior
20/1 Banjo	150/1 Diwali Dancer
20/1 Ciel De Brion	150/1 Do Rightly
25/1 Brave Highlander	150/1 Joe White
25/1 Scott Banks	150/1 Pond House
28/1 Court Melody	200/1 Dams
28/1 St Mellion Fairway	200/1 Greenhill Tare Away
33/1 Celtic Abbey	200/1 Griffins Bar
33/1 Choisty	250/1 Hillwalk
33/1 Gimme Five	250/1 Fabricator
33/1 Killeshim	500/1 Maple Dancer
50/1 Avro Anson	*Stormracker
50/1 General Crack	

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For the National, Ladbrokes are favourite.

The experts' opinions

RICHARD EDMONDSON	GREG WOOD	HYPERION
1 Suny Bay	1 Dun Belle	1 Him Of Praise
2 Him Of Praise	2 Rough Quest	2 Rough Quest
3 Rough Quest	3 Challenger Du Luc	3 Court Melody
4 Samlee	4 Him Of Praise	4 Suny Bay
Best outsider: Scott Banks	Best outsider: Scott Banks	Best outsider: Celtic Abbey

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Grand National colours and form

3.45
BBC1

1 12-145 SUNY BAY (16) C Brooks 9yo 12st G Bradley 15-2
Owner: Uplands Bloodstock.

No gray has won the Grand National since Nicolaus Silver in 1961 but this one did better than most last year, finishing 25 lengths second to Lord Gyllene. He won the Hennessy Cognac Gold Cup at Newbury last November, but was a moderate fifth in the Gold Cup last time out. With conditions in his favour, he must have an each-way chance.
Going ✓ Distance ✓ Jumping ✓ Rating 142



2 12-233F ROUGH QUEST (16) (CD) T Casey 12yo 11st 4lb M Fitzgerald 6-1
Owner: A Wales.

Won the 1996 National in brilliant style, but has had injury problems since and, although still useful, at the age of 12 is not the force he once was. He was still going well when falling in the Cheltenham Gold Cup last time, but the fact that he came a cropper at all has to be a major worry given his short odds.
Going ✓ Distance ✓ Jumping ✓ Rating 151



3 222F40 CHALLENGER DU LUC (16) M Pipe 9yo 11st 3lb A P McCoy B 11-1
Owner: D Johnson.

Talented chaser at up to three miles, but is notorious for finding nothing under pressure. His trainer won the National with Minnehoma in 1994 and, with the champion jockey in the saddle, he might just take to these fences. However, he finished well beaten in the Cheltenham Gold Cup last time and is unlikely to last today's marathon distance.
Going ✓ Distance ✓ Jumping ✓ Rating 147



4 346-P03 SCOTTON BANKS (28) C T Eastley 9yo 10st 7lb L Wyer 28-1
Owner: I Bray.

A very smart performer two seasons ago, who looked like he could make it right to the top, but has had his problems and has been a shadow of his former self this term. Finished a remote third on his latest start at Doncaster, and unless he can recapture his former sparkle, seems unlikely to make much of an impact.
Going ✓ Distance ✓ Jumping ✓ Rating 130



5 P6-1360 BANJO (70) (C) D Nicholson 9yo 10st 7lb R Johnson 18-1
Owner: D Mercer.

A useful novice chaser three years ago, but had to undergo an operation for colic and did not race for almost two years. Ran promising races early in the season, but had been disappointing on his last two starts. Stays 3½ miles well, but is not certain to last today's marathon journey and has been off the course for over two months.
Going ✓ Distance ✓ Jumping ✓ Rating 144



6 P/55165 EARTH SUMMIT (35) N T Davies 10yo 10st 5lb C Llewellyn B 9-1
Owner: The Summit Partnership.

Won the Scottish National when only six in 1994, but subsequently had injury problems. However, he came right back to his best when winning the Welsh National at Cheltenham last December. Has disappointed on his last two starts, but stays and jumps very well and would have a leading chance if running to his best.
Going ✓ Distance ✓ Jumping ✓ Rating 141



7 3U65-3P AVRO ANSON (F8) Miss J Carnacho 10yo 10st 3lb Doubtful
Owner: Axiom.

Formerly a smart staying hurdler and still lacks experience over fences. Finished sixth in last year's National and might do better this time although he would have preferred faster ground than he will get today. Showed his well-being when finishing fourth in 2½-mile Flat race - form figures above are for jump races only - at Doncaster last week.
Going ✓ Distance ✓ Jumping ✓ Rating 140



8 P0-336P NATHAN LAD (35) Miss J Pitman 9yo 10st 3lb R Farman B 16-1
Owner: J Shaw.

Smart chaser on his day who finished third in the Peter Marsh Chase at Haydock in January but has been disappointing since. Finished a well-beaten ninth in last year's National, but if he bounces back to form, he could run well. He has won this race twice - Corbiere (1983) and Royal Athlete (1995) - and this one has each-way prospects.
Going ✓ Distance ✓ Jumping ✓ Rating 144



9 3-032UP DUN BELLE (35) P Fahy (H) 9yo 10st T P Treacy 18-1
Owner: Mrs A Connolly.

Won four times in Ireland last season and recently ran the race of her life to finish 15 lengths second to the classy Dorcas Pride in the Hennessy Gold Cup at Leopardstown. However, she failed to handle Haydock's big fences when pulled up in the Greenalls Grand National Trial last time - an all-omen for her first date with the Aintree obstacles.
Going ✓ Distance ✓ Jumping ✓ Rating 148



10 1/1P-3P GENERAL CRACK (37) P Nichols 9yo 10st Mr J Tizzard 40-1
Owner: Mrs Sandra Lilly.

Useful chaser last season but has had injury problems, was absent for a year and has disappointed this term. Goes in the mud and is a fluent jumper, but is uncertain to last 4½ miles and is not well handicapped. Connections are out for compensation after Sea More Business was carried out in the Gold Cup but are unlikely to get it.
Going ✓ Distance ✓ Jumping ✓ Rating 130



11 32F2P4 GO UNIVERSAL (43A) (C) N Chance 10yo 10st Mr S Durack 66-1
Owner: Universal Conference & Incentive Ltd.

Useful 2½-mile chaser, who finished second in the Tripleprint Gold Cup at Cheltenham last season but has not run this season. Goes well in the mud but is far from certain to stay the distance and sometimes makes mistakes. Trainer won Cheltenham Gold Cup with Mr Mulgan last year but is unlikely to get in the winner's enclosure here.
Going ✓ Distance ✓ Jumping ✓ Rating 133



12 602440 CIEL DE BRION (81) F Doumen (F) 9yo 10st Mr T Doumen B 18-1
Owner: Henri de Pracomat.

Gallois raider, who was a credible fourth to Suny Bay in the Hennessy Cognac Gold Cup at Newbury last November. Has disappointed on his last two starts but his trainer has a fantastic strike-rate with his sires to Britain and this safe jumper, who goes in the mud, could reward each-way support, if he stays the distance.
Going ✓ Distance ✓ Jumping ✓ Rating 134



13 234R1P COURT MELODY (35) P Nichols 10yo 10st T J Murphy B 25-1
Owner: Mick Cottom.

Useful chaser who finished second to Samlee in the Becher Chase over three miles three furlongs over these fences in November and has since won the Agia Diamond Chase at Sandown. Disappointed in the Greenalls Grand National Trial at Haydock last time but, if he came back to his best, would have a major chance.
Going ✓ Distance ✓ Jumping ✓ Rating 143



14 4U11-4P CELTIC ABBEY (84) Miss V Williams 10yo 10st N Williamson 28-1
Owner: Chris and Antonia Deutera.

Fox lovers may oppose this former hunter chaser on principle and formbook followers could follow suit as this one stays well but unseated his rider at The Chair in last year's National, needs fast ground to be seen at his best and was very disappointing in testing conditions on his latest start. His shrewd trainer is a name to remember, but is best forgotten today.
Going ✓ Distance ✓ Jumping ✓ Rating 135



15 11102 HIM OF PRAISE (35) O Sherwood 8yo 10st C F Swan 9-1
Owner: M G St Quinton.

Thorough stayer, who won Anthony Midway Chase at Sandown in January but looked a bit maul when staying on under pressure to be second in the Greenalls Grand National Trial at Haydock on his latest start. Ideal type for the race if in the mood and, despite having to carry 7lb more than his true handicap weight, could go close.
Going ✓ Distance ✓ Jumping ✓ Rating 138



16 1142-P0 INTO THE RED (14) (C) Mrs M Reveley 14yo 10st D Gallagher 66-1
Owner: J Huckle.

Veteran stayer who was once useful and won the three-mile-three-furlong Becher Chase over these fences in 1996 but is now in decline. Looks the sort who can be relied on jump round, provided nothing gets in his way, but is surely too slow nowadays to make an impact, even at testing conditions.
Going ✓ Distance ✓ Jumping ✓ Rating 120

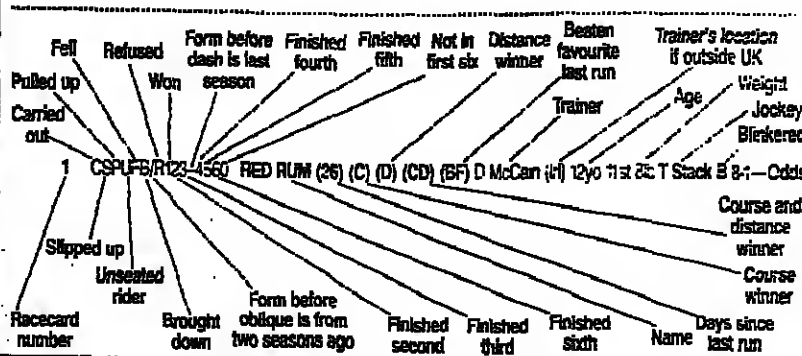


17 1-22P4J WHAT A HAND (18) P Nichols 10yo 10st C Maude 66-1
Owner: J McCarthy.

Formerly a useful Irish point-to-pointer (yes, the fox bothers again) and ran well on his first two starts this term but has become disappointing. Could have been yards for 13000 guineas at Doncaster Sales last Monday but, not sure to stay and a far from fluent jumper. You were probably better off leaving that nest egg in the building society.
Going ✓ Distance ✓ Jumping ✓ Rating 134



HOW TO READ THE FORM



18 535-560 ST MELLION FAIRWAY (18) P Webber 9yo 10st A Thornton 33-1
Owner: St Mellion Estates.

Big strong sort who had some good form last season and finished a credible fifth in the Thyestes Chase at Gowran Park in Ireland on his reappearance, but has twice disappointed since. Stays and jumps well and goes in the mud, but even if he came back to his best, faces a tough task with 9lb more than his true handicap weight.
Going ✓ Distance ✓ Jumping ✓ Rating 133



19 35133 SAMLEE (42) (C) (BF) P Hobbs 9yo 10st R Dumwoody 10-1
Owner: White Lion Partnership.

Won the three-mile-three-furlong Becher Chase over these fences in November and has since run well in the Welsh National at Cheltenham and the Elder Chase at Newcastle. Stays and goes in the mud, but makes mistakes, is set to carry 10lb more than his true handicap weight and his dual National winning jockey is likely to put up overweight.
Going ✓ Distance ✓ Jumping ✓ Rating 129



20 1/3003P GIMME FIVE (18) E O'Grady (H) 11yo 10st K Whelan 33-1
Owner: J P McManus.

Versatile Irish chaser who has won at two miles and goes in heavy ground, but is unproven beyond three miles. Disappointing at the Cheltenham Festival on his latest start and must carry 11lb more than his true handicap weight. Medium of a bat of £10000 each-way at 66-1 on Thursday. His owner is a legendary Irish gambler, but is unlikely to add to his 'wedgie' today.
Going ✓ Distance ✓ Jumping ✓ Rating 132



21 3/P0PPP GREENHILL TARE AWAY (21) P Hobbs 10yo 10st S McNeill 100-1
Owner: Silvio Giannini.

Was a useful stayer two years ago but has lost his way this season and has clearly had some problems. Was exhausted when refusing at the last fence at Newbury and was pulled up on his latest start when blinkered to try to make him concentrate. Should not be backed and probably should not be running in a race as tough as this.
Going ✓ Distance ✓ Jumping ✓ Rating 115



22 P2-4422 STORMTRACKER (42) C Weedon 9yo 10st Doubtful
Owner: Tim Davis.

Thorough staying chaser who was runner up in the National Hunt Chase at the Cheltenham Festival in 1997 and ran well to finish second in the Elder Chase at Newcastle on his latest start. Jumps well but all his best form has been on fast ground and, racing in the mud, carrying 14lb more than his true handicap weight, may be his undoing.
Going ✓ Distance ✓ Jumping ✓ Rating 131



23 2-1F2P2 YEOMAN WARRIOR (28) R Rowe 11yo 10st Richard Guest 66-1
Owner: Mrs Heather Alwen.

Finished second in the 2½-mile John Hughes Chase over these fences last year and has run some fair races this term, but was disappointing last time, carries 17lb more than his true handicap weight and has fallen too recently for comfort. Usually races with his tongue-tied and most formbook students will be in the same boat if he wins here.
Going ✓ Distance ✓ Jumping ✓ Rating 121



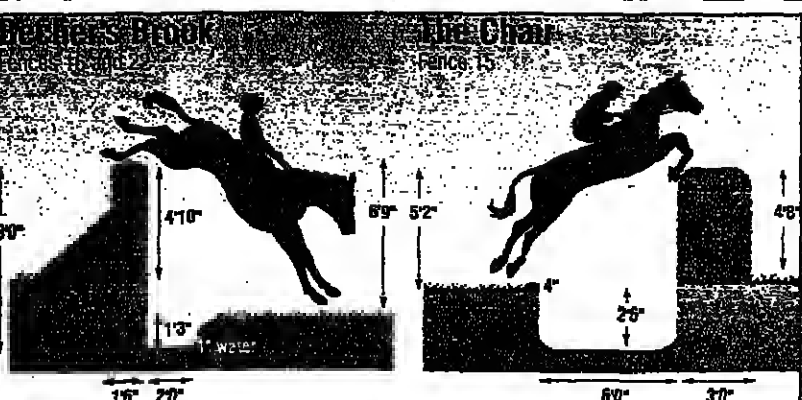
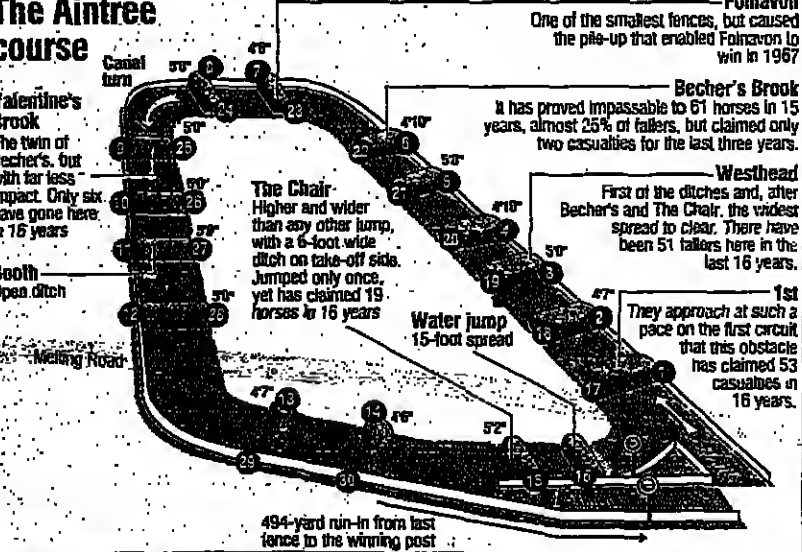
24 11F-131 POND HOUSE (222) (C) M Pipe 9yo 10st T Dascombe 100-1
Owner: C R Fleet.

Summer specialist who won at Cartmel and seaside track Newton Abbot back in August but will not fit his bucket and spade much use here. Usually a front-runner, so could be up there early on, but needs firm ground, probably does not stay beyond 2½ miles and carries 19lb more than his true handicap weight.
Going ✓ Distance ✓ Jumping ✓ Rating 111



25 4U142 BRAVE HIGHLANDER (21) J Gifford 10yo 10st P Hide 28-1
Owner: S Embickson.

Front-runner who has had injury problems over the years and went lame in the closing stages when fourth on his penultimate start. Ran a fair race last time. Runs in the colours that made Aldanti and Bob Champion famous in 1981 but is not in that class. Not sure to stay and carries a massive 20lb more than his true handicap weight.
Going ✓ Distance ✓ Jumping ✓ Rating 123



PREVIOUS NATIONAL WINNERS

1997: Lord Gyllene 16-1	1984: Hallo Dandy 13-1
1996: Rough Quest 7-1	1983: Corbiere 13-1
1995: Royal Athlete 40-1	1982: Gritter 7-1
1994: Minnehoma 16-1	1981: Aldanti 10-1
1993: Vold race	1980: Ben Nevis 40-1
1992: Party Politics 14-1	1979: Rubisc 25-1
1991: Seagran 12-1	1978: Lucius 14-1
1990: Mr Frisk 16-1	1977: Red Rum 9-1
1989: Little Polveir 28-1	1976: Rag Trade 14-1
1988: Rhyme 'N' Reason 10-1	1975: L'Escargot 13-2
1987: Maori Venture 28-1	1974: Red Rum 11-1
1986: West Tip 15-2	1973: Red Rum 9-1
1985: Last Suspect 50-1	

26 6-U51PF HILLWALK (99) R Curtis 12yo 10st Mr R Wakley 150-1
Owner: M L Shone.

Far veteran who won at Cheltenham in November but has pulled up on both starts since. Goes in the mud and is suited by a strong pace - he will get that at right - but tends to jump low and that's not a good tendency to have at The Chair - 5' 2" with a ditch in front of it you could drive a man through - if he gets that far. Out of his depth.
Going ✓ Distance ✓ Jumping ✓ Rating 121



27 1/24F8P JOE WHITE (463) (C) J H Johnson 12yo 10st Mr T McCarthy 100-1
Owner: Mrs E A Rhodes.

Once useful chaser who was disappointing last season and returns after a massive lay-off. Goes in the mud but is unproven beyond three miles and a furlong and is not the best of jumpers. Carrying 20lb more than his true handicap weight, he looks well out of his depth and must be most unlikely to complete the course.
Going ✓ Distance ✓ Jumping ✓ Rating 110



28 311FU DIWALI DANCER (18) M Pipe 8yo 10st R Thornton B 150-1
Owner: B Case.

Front-running 2½-mile novice chaser (had not won a chase at the start of the season) who won little races at Leicester and Haydock earlier this season but has ended up on the floor on his last two starts. Goes in the mud but lacks stamina, is an inexperienced and sketchy jumper and carries 21lb more than his true handicap weight. No chance.
Going ✓ Distance ✓ Jumping ✓ Rating 119



29 54P505 KILLESHEIN (21) (C) H Manners 12yo 10st S Curran 28-1
Owner: H J Manners.

Few horses genuinely stay 4½ miles over two circuits of the National course but this one, who plugged on to finish seventh in last year's National, would go round a third time. Finished fourth in the Welsh National at Cheltenham in December but below par since. Has conditions in his favour, but carries 22lb more than his true handicap mark.
Going ✓ Distance ✓ Jumping ✓ Rating 110



30 F23/P24 DO RIGHTLY (11) M Bradstock 9yo 10st P Holley 100-1
Owner: J M Fitzpatrick.

This front-runner had some far form two years ago and bounced back to his best when runner up at Bangor. However, that was Bangor, this is Aintree, this is the National and, although he goes well in the mud, might stay the distance and jumps well enough, he is way out of his depth carrying 22lb more than his true handicap weight.
Going ✓ Distance ✓ Jumping ✓ Rating 120



31 F/FB040 FABRICATOR (16) Mrs A Naughton 12yo 10st J Supple 200-1
Owner: James Clements.

Ex-Irish 2½-mile chaser, who is deteriorating with age and has shown little form this season. Goes in the mud but won't stay, has fallen this season and carries 24lb more than his true handicap weight. Has as much chance as a piece of toast (and statistics show that a slice of said toast has yet to even be placed in the National).
Going ✓ Distance ✓ Jumping ✓ Rating 110



32 4/504-P4 PASHTO (21) N Henderson 11yo 10st J R Kavanagh 100-1
Owner: Raymond Tooth.

Fair sort on his day and was having his first run for three months when a remote fourth at Sandown last time. Goes in soft ground and jumps fluently but proven only up to 3½ miles and is unlikely to stay much further. Could be up there for a crowd, but, carrying 24lb more than his true handicap weight, looks a banker to fade thereafter.
Going ✓ Distance ✓ Jumping ✓ Rating 110



33 13/2U2 RADICAL CHOICE (21) J Charlton 9yo 10st B Storey 66-1
Owner: George A Charlton.

Far hurdler two years ago, but made his chasing debut only in December (won at Newcastle) and has been twice beaten and once failed to finish since. Stays very well and goes in the mud, but lack of jumping experience is a major worry and, carrying 28lb more than his true handicap weight, his prospects of success are poor.
Going ✓ Distance ✓ Jumping ✓ Rating 119



34 1231P DAMAS (86) M Pipe 7yo 10st J Evans B 150-1
Owner: Fergus Wilson.

Won selling (lowest grade) hurdles at Exeter and Towcester in the autumn and scored over fences at Windsor recently. Ran badly last time, is unproven beyond three miles and is not the best of jumpers. Throw in the fact he carries 28lb more than his true handicap weight and you have all the ingredients for a losing bet on the National.
Going ✓ Distance ✓ Jumping ✓ Rating 106



35 11U-2F1 CHOISTY (28) H Haynes 9yo 10st R McGrath 50-1
Owner: G A Swinbank.

Sold for 10000 guineas at Doncaster sales last September, he fell in the Elder Chase at Newcastle before winning a minor chase at Warwick. Goes well in the mud, but has yet to race over this distance, is not the best of jumpers and carries 29lb more than his true handicap weight. Only eight, he should go on to win more races, but not this one.
Going ✓ Distance ✓ Jumping ✓ Rating 112



36 P5U-5F GRIFFINS BAR (2) M P Sly 10yo 10st G Torney 150-1
Owner: M S Smith.

Fifth to Samlee over these fences in the three-mile-three-furlong Becher Chase in November but fell at the second fence in the John Hughes Chase over these fences on Thursday. Stays well and goes in the mud, but is not the most reliable of jumpers - he unseated his rider in the 1996 Becher - and carries 30lb more than his true handicap weight. No chance.
Going ✓ Distance ✓ Jumping ✓ Rating 160



37 22-516 WINTER BELLE (18) J H Johnson 9yo 10st Mr C Bonner 50-1
Owner: Mrs M W Bird.

Won two chases at Cartmel before finishing a fair sixth in a competitive event at the Cheltenham Festival. However, he faces an even tougher assignment here and, although proven in the mud, he is not sure to stay, jumps deliberately and carries a gigantic 32lb more than his true handicap weight. Enough said.
Going ✓ Distance ✓ Jumping ✓ Rating 117



38 13-5PPP MAPLE DANCER (11) D Williams 12yo 10st G Shenkin 500-1
Owner: Dr Ian R Shenkin.

Fair chaser last season but has made mistakes and has shown little ability this term and has run as if something was amiss with him physically in his most recent starts. Unproven beyond three miles, he needs to improve his jumping but Aintree, carrying 32lb more than his true handicap weight, is hardly the arena in which to practice it.
Going ✓ Distance ✓ Jumping ✓ Rating 105



39 12300 DECYBORG (18) M Pipe 7yo 10st P Carbery 200-1
Owner: Terry Neil.

Front-runner who won over hurdles at Taunton in November and has some far form over fences, but jumped badly when out of his depth in the Kim Muir Chase at the Cheltenham Festival last time and is more so here. Not sure to stay and, carrying a huge 32lb more than his true handicap weight, has two hopes - Bob Hope and no hope.
Going ✓ Distance ✓ Jumping ✓ Rating 105



- 39 declared -

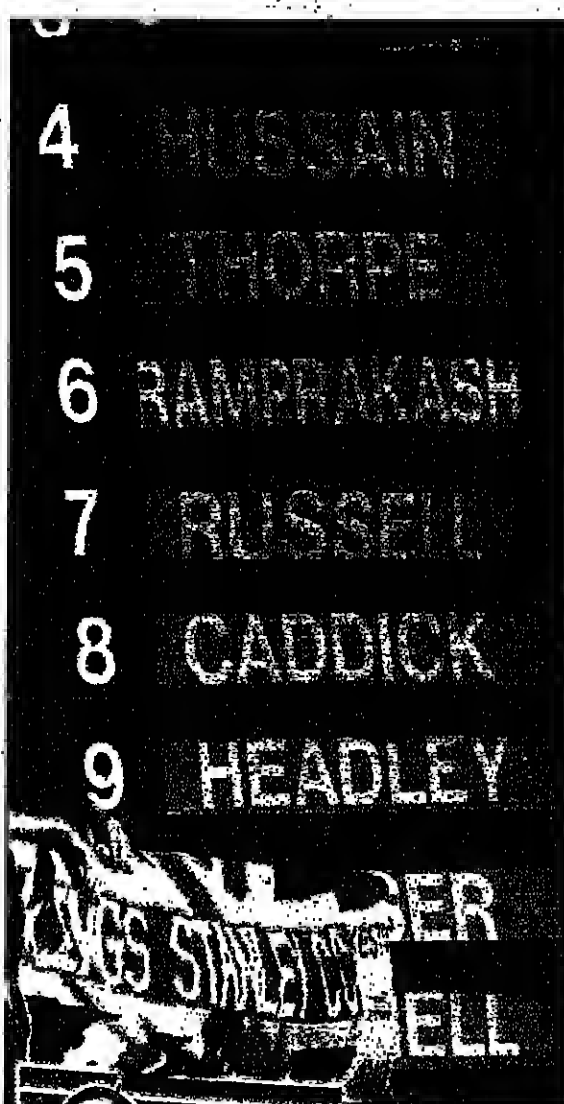
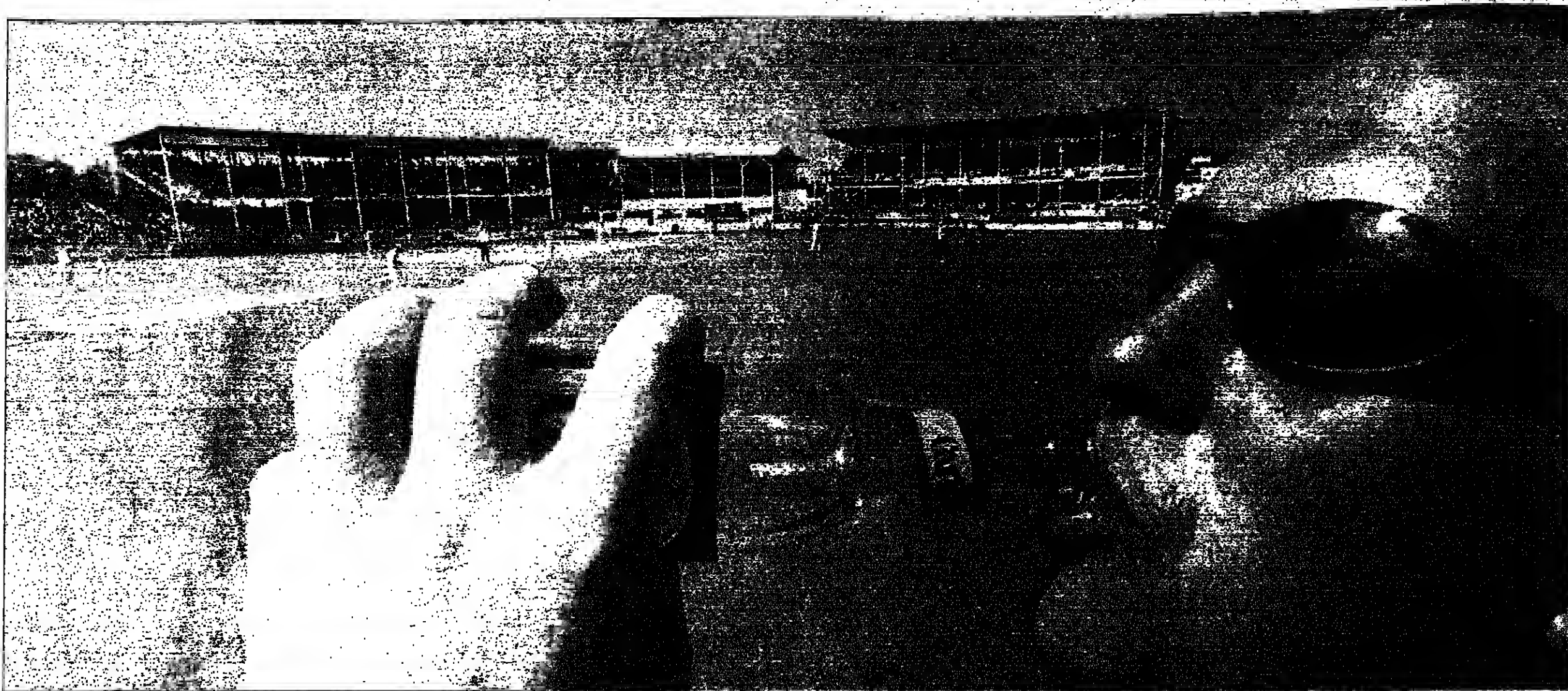
Minimum weight: 10st. True handicap weights: Dun Belle 9st 12lb, General Crack 9st 12lb, Go Universal 9st 10lb, Ciel de Brion 9st 10lb, Court Melody 9st 10lb, Celtic Abbey 9st 9lb, Him of Praise 9st 7lb, Into the Red 9st 7lb, What a Hand 9st 5lb, St Mellion Fairway 9st 5lb, Samlee 9st 4lb, Gimme Five 9st 3lb, Greenhill Tare Away 9st 1lb, Stormtracker 9st, Yeoman Warrior 8st 11lb, Pond House 8st 9lb, Brave Highlander 8st 8lb, Hillwalk 8st 8lb, Joe White 8st 8lb, Diwali Dancer 8st 7lb, Killeshein 8st 6lb, Do Rightly 8st 6lb, Fabricator 8st 4lb, Pashto 8st 4lb, Radical Choice 8st, Damas 8st, Choisty 7st 13lb, Griffins Bar 7st 12lb, Winter Belle 7st 10lb, Maple Dancer 7st 10lb, Decyborg 7st 10lb.

BETTING: 6-1 Rough Quest, 15-2 Suny Bay, 9-1 Earth Summit, Him of Praise, 10-1 Samlee, 11-1 Challenger du Luc, 16-1 Nathan Lad, 18-1 Banjo, Ciel de Brion, Dun Belle, 25-1 Court Melody, 28-1 Brave Highlander, Celtic Abbey, Killeshein, Scotton Banks, 33-1 Gimme Five, St Mellion Fairway, 40-1 General Crack, 50-1 Choisty, Winter Belle, 66-1 Go Universal, Into the Red, Radical Choice, What a Hand, Yeoman Warrior, 100-1 Do Rightly, Greenhill Tare Away, Joe White, Pashto, Pond House, 150-1 Damas, Diwali Dancer, Griffins Bar, Hillwalk, 200-1 Decyborg, Fabricator, 500-1 Maple Dancer.

1997: Lord Gyllene 9yo 10st A Dobbin (S Brookshaw) 16-1

Compiled by Ian Davies

76-10000-10000



On tour with the Barmies

Going on tour with the Barmy Army is really hard work. First, there is the problem of downing enough of the local beer to get in exactly the right kind of mood (see below, at fifth Test in St John's, Antigua).

Then, as at the sixth Test in Bridgetown, Barbados (below left), there is all that noise and teasing from locals who seem convinced that their cricketers make England's look like a bunch of hopeless has-beens. Then there is having to dress up, but the idea that the sight of Laa-Laa and friends might somehow disturb the mighty Lara proved mistaken. At least Tinky Winky got to celebrate Mark Ramprakash's Man of the Match award. And then there's having to take your shirt off in all that sun.

● Copies of these photographs – and any others by *The Independent's* sports photographers David Ashdown, Peter Jay and Robert Ham – can be ordered by telephoning 0171 293 2534.

PHOTOGRAPHS
BY
DAVID ASHDOWN



هكذا من الرجل

England's best example of a passion player

Richard Cockerill's public image of an uppity hooker is one he relishes. Chris Hewett met the non-stop talker

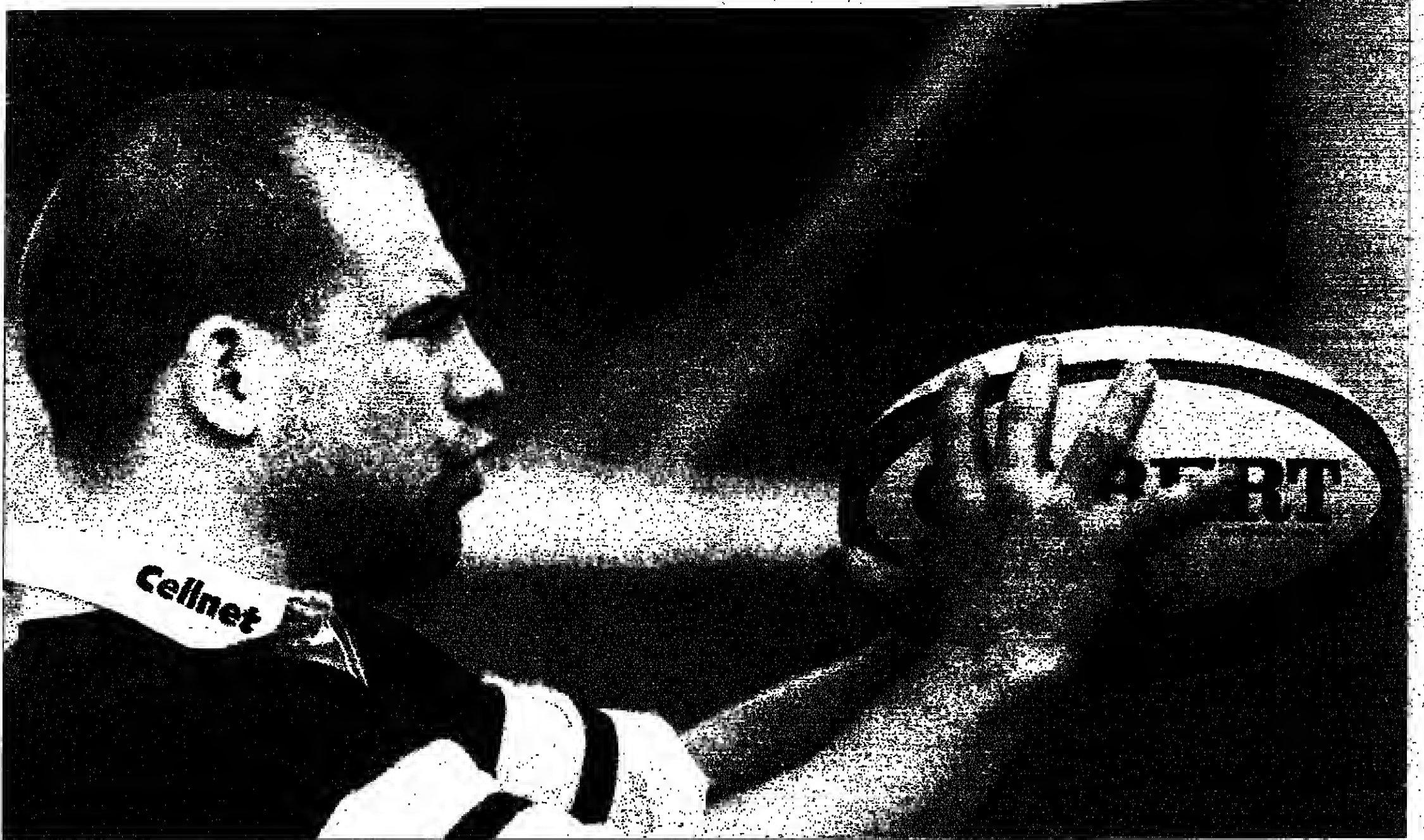
ONLY a mother could love him. If, in the considered opinion of one of his rival hookers, Richard Cockerill is blessed with "a face you never get tired of punching", he is also the self-appointed embodiment of the bulldog spirit, an enthusiastic practitioner of rugby's black arts and the proud architect of the most calculated act of sporting wind-upmanship since Douglas Jardine employed bodyline as a fail-safe means of bursting every blood vessel in Australia. In other words, he gets under your skin and stays there.

And does this reputation as a professional pain worry the man who, last November, famously trespassed on the All Blacks' haka at Old Trafford and lived to dine out on his story? Does it heck. "It's just me being me, isn't it?" he says, an impudent grin creasing its way across the features that launched a thousand dust-ups.

"It takes all different sorts to make a world and while I'm quite happy to admit that I occasionally push things a bit far, I certainly don't sit there in the dressing-room thinking: 'Oh God, why did I do that?' I'm not a great one for regrets. In fact, I look at it this way: if opponents spend valuable time losing their rags with me instead of concentrating on the game, it's money in the bank."

Cockerill dons the letter B when he plays for his beloved Leicester and there is a wide range of theory as to what the "B" might stand for. With England, he wraps himself in a No 2 shirt once worn with distinction by strong, silent types - John Pullin, say, or Peter Wheeler - but which now, it seems, is the exclusive preserve of chippy, uppity front-row irritants with far too much to say for themselves. Put Brian Moore, Mark Regan, Phil Greening and the present incumbent in the same room and you have a thoroughly boisterous debating society capable of talking the hind legs off a Springbok.

Yet for more seasons than he would care to remember, Cockerill appeared to be talking to



Cockerill crows: 'I'm not a great one for regrets. If opponents spend valuable time losing their rags with me instead of concentrating on the game, it's money in the bank.'

Photograph: David Ashdown

himself. Certainly, Jack Rowell turned a deaf ear to his claims for international recognition until, as much through Hobson's Choice as anything else, he handed the most talkative Tiger of them all a flight ticket to Buenos Aires for last year's two-Test series with Argentina.

"I suppose Regan's selection for the Lions opened the door, so I've got that much to thank him for," admits Cockerill, whose intense vocal and physical rivalry with the equally forthright West countryman has proved one of the more entertaining private conflicts of the last few seasons. "While he was available and Greening was fit, I wasn't in with a shout as far as Jack was concerned. But Mark was elsewhere last

summer, Phil got injured early in the first Test and suddenly, my opportunity was there, staring me in the face.

"Looking back, it couldn't have worked out more positively. The Argentinians may not be the mightiest all-round force in world rugby but they scrummage better than virtually anyone, so I knew that a couple of quality performances against the likes of Gran Meoded and Reggiardo, could only give my career a leg up.

"The Pumas hit us with all the brute strength they could muster and the atmosphere was seriously hostile, but we soaked it all up and went back for more."

As a result, England quickly decided they wanted more of

Cockerill. Clive Woodward's appointment as national coach sparked an immediate bonfire of Rowell's selectorial vanities and after a strangely ill-judged punt on the immature talents of Andy Long against the Wallabies last autumn, he made the 27-year-old, dyed-in-the-wool Midlander his No 1 choice - a status heavily reinforced by the timely knee injury that allowed him to miss an embarrassing afternoon of set-piece torment against the Feroch in February.

Recalled for the watershed match with Wales at Twickenham, Cockerill helped a much-maligned front row regain some credibility by spearheading a pushover try. England subsequently forced a penalty try

against the Scots and while the Irish threesome is sufficiently big and ugly to look after itself in this afternoon's Five Nations finale, the red rose heavy brigade are in more confident mood than at any time in the last 12 months.

"People say it was only Wales or only Scotland and I'd be the first to acknowledge that the French front row is the most powerful proposition in Europe," says Cockerill. "I may not have faced them in Paris but I went up against Calafano and Tournaire in this season's Leicester-Toulouse matches and they are very definitely a handful, probably the best I've encountered."

"But you don't find any poor front rows on the international

circuit - both the Welsh and the Scots have good individuals - and we deserve some credit for our achievements."

"Having said that, I expect the Irish to ask us some pretty tough questions at Twickenham and we'll have to be on our game to deal with them. I don't know a great deal about this bloke Corrigan, but Keith Wood was an automatic choice for the Lions last summer and played like one, too, while Paul Wallace has proved time and time again how clever he is, not only at dealing with some of the highest, strongest props in the world but at taking the game to the opposing front row. I think he's a great scrummager, actually: short, stocky and very awkward."

Exactly the same might be said of Cockerill himself - as the "short, fat boy" at school, he was ordered to play loose-head prop until it became clear he would not grow enough to sustain himself in the position - and he takes enormous pleasure in imposing his personality on what is supposed to be a big man's game.

"It can be very demanding in the front row, especially now that the hooker is expected to give everything to the shove on the opposition put-in rather than attempt to out-hook his opposite number as they did years ago. I don't even think about striking for an opponent's ball and if we take one against the head, it's the result of shoving them, off it

rather than pinching a crafty one.

"But another good Leicester boy, Neil Back, has proved that you don't have to be a giant to survive in the back row and I'd like to think I'm doing the same in my position."

"It's all passion with me; I give everything I have to give whenever I play and if that gets the crowd going, all well and good. They've paid good money to come and watch, so why not give them a show?"

Much to the amusement of a Twickenham audience seldom accused of wearing its heart on its back, Cockerill has been entirely faithful to his ball-and-all credo this season. He is what he is and he says what he means. Good on him.

The catalyst with the soul of a poet

THE French team might be on the verge of winning their first ever back-to-back Grand Slam, but for those who have followed the week's build-up to the crucial match against Wales at Wembley tomorrow, the most striking factor is the imperturbable calm and composure in the French camp.

Perhaps it has something to do with their new captain, Raphael Ibanez, the hooker from Dax who arrived as a virtual unknown at the beginning of this season's Five Nations' Championship and who appears to have been the catalyst for what is virtually a spontaneous generation of new players.

Before France played England in the vital opening game of the Championship in February, Ibanez had only six caps, four of which were as a replacement. But scarcely two months later, he is firmly established as the captain who will lead them into the World Cup next year. He is a fresh voice at the heart of a side traumatised by the humiliating 52-10 defeat against South Africa last November.

Reserved and softly spoken off the field, Ibanez is almost a novelty in today's international rugby: a front-row forward with a literary bent, a hooker who leads by example but who is always capable of retaining a perspective on both rugby and life. Built like a bull, but with the soul of a poet, his carry-on luggage for the trip to Waterloo contained a book of short stories by the great Spanish novelist Cervantes. Having hesitated, after winning his French equivalent of A levels, between an art degree and a

Virtually unknown at the start of the season, Raphael Ibanez has emerged as a natural leader. Ian Borthwick met him

career in sport. Ibanez has for years maintained a passion for the written word, going as far as consigning, in an immaculately written hand, his deepest thoughts to a series of journals.

A perfectionist on and off the field, he regards the act of writing as a form of discipline. "These days I don't have the time any more to do much more than write on bold."

The grandson of a Spanish Republican who fled Spain in the 1930s seeking refuge in the south-west corner of France, Ibanez drives a clapped-out old Citroën 2CV and claims to be totally removed from the material concerns of life. Independent of spirit, enamoured of the idea of liberty his great passion outside rugby is fly-fishing in the rivers of the Basque country and he considers one of the great watersheds of his life to be a trip to Argentina in the summer of 1995.

After his club Dax was defeated by Toulouse in the semi-final of that year's French Championship, Ibanez threw a few clothes into a backpack and took off. On his own from Buenos Aires to Mendoza and Tucuman he went in search of himself as much as of Argentina.

"I wanted to meet people from all levels of society, and to see for myself the damage caused by colonialism and to find out what has happened to the original Indians of Argentina," he said. "I wanted to travel alone, it was vital. When you are alone in a foreign country like that you are obliged to be open-minded and to make an effort towards other people."

"But above all, I wanted to prove to myself that despite being so messy and removed from material realities, I am capable of organising myself."

Apparently this organisational capacity is now paying off as he has slipped effortlessly into the role of the natural leader of the Tricolours, something which they have lacked for several years. Captain of the French juniors who won the World Cup in Madrid in 1992, and the French Universities team which won the Students' World Cup in South Africa in 1996, he is clearly accustomed to the task. For him, this week's preparation at Clairefontaine has been based on retaining mental freshness in the players and not overtraining them.

"It is impossible not to think



Ibanez: Anti-materialistic free-thinking captain

about it, but we are trying to keep the idea of the Grand Slam as far as possible from our minds," he said as the Eurostar cruised through the French countryside towards the Channel.

"First of all we have a match to win against Wales, and once we have done that we can start thinking about the rewards of a Grand Slam."

The memories of the close shave at the Stade de France when they almost lost to the fired-up Irish a month ago are still very much alive in the French camp, and Ibanez says his pre-match team talk will be all about lifting their commitment to produce the same sort of dedicated defensive effort that they showed against England.

"Against Ireland we were not sufficiently aggressive, we let them get the upper hand, and it was very difficult to get back into the match. We can't afford to let that happen again."

"We are all aware of the historical significance of this match and if we win the Grand Slam will come as an added reward. But we have not forgotten that first of all we have a match to win."

Twin towers likely to host France's first twin Slam

By Chris Hewett

ENGLAND'S new breed of globally conscious go-getters may consider a Five Nations' Grand Slam to be only slightly less common than the contents of a Soho stripper's lingerie drawer, but the French still treasure it as a glittering prize of inestimable value. Should Raphael Ibanez and his gifted colleagues dazzle their way past a depleted Welsh outfit at Wembley tomorrow - and if they realise only 75 per cent of their potential, they will surely win with something to spare - they can anticipate the freedom of every half-decent restaurant between Paris and Provence.

Only six illustrious Tricolours - Serge Blanco, Roland Bertranne, Pierre Berbizier, Robert Paparemborde, Jean-François Imberton and Jean-Pierre Rives - can claim to have participated in more than one Grand Slam and for all the fizz, flair and physicality they have brought to the championship over the last 85 years, the French have never before secured back-to-back Slams. It is, then, a momentous occasion for the 13 surviving contributors to last season's full house of victories.

Yet while Ibanez and company are concentrating all their thoughts on landing the immediate catch, one French visionary is keeping at least half an eye on the bigger fish looming on the horizon. Pierre Villepreux desires the Slam as intensely as any of his countrymen, but having reinvented the role of the full-back during an international career spanning the late 1960s and early 70s, he is now applying his formidable rugby brain to the reinvention of the national team in time for next year's World Cup.

"We have two main aims against Wales," said the assistant coach, whose resourceful partnership with Jean-Claude Skrela, a former Test colleague, appears to have persuaded even the notoriously self-destructive sporting politicians of the French Federation that this is a back-room regime worthy of their whole-hearted support.

"The first is to see the players take their place in history by winning another Slam. If they manage that, the second aim - a growth in confidence as we approach the World Cup - will automatically be realised."

"We came into this tournament with a young team and a new captain and the good thing from a coach's point of view is that they are so eager to learn. This side has a healthy mentality; it has a long way to go before people can call it anything more than good, but the steps we have taken are all positive. A great prize awaits these players and while they expect a very

tough match at an unfamiliar stadium, there is a great sense of anticipation amongst them."

Villepreux is too nimble in thought and deed to be fooled into a 'premature claim' of potential greatness for his side, but both he and Skrela believe they are on the verge of something special. The three wins to date were achieved without Abdel Benazzi, Olivier Merle, Emile Ntamack, Marc Dal Maso and, for the most part, Philippe Benetton, and any side sufficiently rich in resources to marginalise a quintet of that quality has little to be modest about.

Philippe Bernat-Salles, the greying Pau wing whose legs appear to be approximately two decades younger than the rest of him, has slammed the door shut on N'tamack with a rush of sublime finishing that has yielded him a try a match. Olivier Brouzet and Fabien Pelous have formed a thoroughly modern second-row partnership while the Llievreumont brothers,

Thomas and Marc, have made such strides in the back row that Benetton has been relegated to the bench and the great Benazzi forced out of the squad altogether. Meanwhile, Ibanez has brought his invigorating brand of man management to bear so effectively at hooker that Dal Maso, who positively drips world class, is down among the spear-carriers.

For the Welsh, this season's finale is a daunting obstacle made all the more formidable by Allan Bateman's withdrawal. The university-respected Lions centre had been excused training on compassionate grounds because his six-year-old daughter, Naomi, was suffering from a serious eye complaint. She was still undergoing treatment at Kingston General Hospital in Surrey yesterday and, as a result, Bateman declared himself unavailable.

"Our thoughts are with Allan; while he will be a great loss to the team, we sympathise with his feelings and totally understand his decision to remain with his daughter," said the Welsh coach, Kevin Bowring, who promptly called up Neil Poole, of Llanelli, for his tournament debut. The reshuffle means Wales will field their third different midfield partnership in four Five Nations outings.

Boobyer is nobody's novice, either in attack or defence. But he is not a Bateman - who is at the moment? - and with the Welsh fight forwards still on the skinny side of lightweight, it is difficult to imagine how they can hope to hold Christian Calliano and Franck Ribere at the set-piece and, by extension, Thomas Castaignède at outside half. Put your money on the twin towers to host the first twin Slam in French history.

WALES v FRANCE			
at Wembley Stadium			
K Morgan	Pontypool	J. J. Sadojourny	Colomers
W Proctor	Llanelli	P. Bernat-Salles	Pau
N Boobyer	Llanelli	C. Llamas	Brive
L Davies	Cardiff	S. Glas	Bourgnon
G Thomas	Cardiff	X Garbajosa	Toulouse
N Jenkins	Pontypool	T. Castaignède	Castres
R Howley	Cardiff, capt	P. Carbonneau	Brive
A Lewis	Cardiff	C. Calliano	Toulouse
G Jenkins	Swansea	R. Ibanez	Dax, capt
J Jenkins	Cardiff	F. Tournaire	Toulouse
M Voyle	Llanelli	O. Brouzet	Bègles-Bordeaux
R Moore	Swansea	F. Pelous	Toulouse
R Appleyard	Swansea	M. Llievreumont	Stade Français
C. Charvis	Swansea	O. Magna	Brive
S Davies	Swansea	T. Llievreumont	Perpignan
Replacements: M. D. James (Pontypool); 17. B. Hayward (Brive); 18. P. Jones (Pontypool); 19. K. Jones (Brive); 20. S. Bay (Pontypool); 21. L. Plant (Cardiff); 22. J. Humphreys (Cardiff).			
Replacements: 16. F. Galtie (Colomers); 17. D. Aucagne (Pau); 18. J. L. Aucagne (Castres); 19. P. Benetton (Agen); 20. T. Clode (Pau); 21. C. Soudier (Brive); 22. M. Dal Maso (Agen).			
Referee: P. Marshall (Australia) / Kick-off: 3.0, tomorrow (BBC1)			

هكذا من الأحرار

When I see a bandwagon I jump on board



THE GAFFER TAPES

THE great thing about football is that it is one big family. If someone is in trouble everyone rallies round. So as soon as I got the call last week I knew I had to help out.

Within minutes I'd been on the blower to all the gang. Franz, Pele and Michel. George and Sir Bob, Macca, Jamie and Iny and, of course, all the United boys. They may not be fit for England but, when it comes to a charity match to raise funds to save the Wetherfield One, they were up and running.

Those of you who don't watch the commercial channel, or read the tabloids, may not know who the Wetherfield One is. I refer to Diedrie Barlow, as I still call her. *Coronation Street's* very own people's princess. Poor Diedrie's been stitched up and framed big time and the Rovers Return Sunday Pub League XI, which I had the pleasure of gracing in my

late playing days, asked me to help. Now, while I don't actually watch the programme myself I know a bandwagon when I see it and this one is definitely worth jumping on, already everyone on Tony Blair's *The Sun* are aboard.

Naturally the first person I rang was George at Leeds. Every time I see him he moans about being the victim of a miscarriage of justice so I knew he'd be keen. I wanted him to be the bag man, we expect to take a lot of cash at the gate, but when I told him it meant flying to Switzerland to bank the goodies he bottled it and mumbled something about wanting to keep his feet on the ground.

Still, we've got a pitch sorted and expect to do pretty well. The best bit is that as Diedrie is a figment of someone's imagination and she doesn't really incur court costs we can keep all the loot. And when she's inevitably freed in some future

episode we can join in back-slapping.

Talking of money-spinners I got a great idea on my mid-week travels with Chelsea. The way these trips operate is the best little earner since Bosman. You hire a cheap plane and check out a cheap hotel miles from the plush one the team are in. Then you calculate how many seats the team and official hangers-on need, add in a buffer zone of five rows of empty seats - to keep the smell away - and flog the rest of them to the press and "executive punters" (there always some prepared to pay the earth to sit within singing distance of Ed De Goey).

The idea is to overcharge the press and punters by enough to ensure the team travel free. So the Chelsea trip was marked up to about £800 for one night in a hotel, two flights and a couple of coach journeys. The profit

probably paid Zola's wages for a whole week.

Fortunately I got a Managers' Union discount as it was a fact-finding trip. I now know 11 Italians are better than three, especially if the 11 earn cumulatively less than the three.

This is the sort of knowledge we'll need in the Interoto Cup next season. Yep, that's right, Sludgethorpe Brazil are taking on the might of Europe for the first time since the chairman's dad flew Lancaster bombers in the War. We see the Interoto as a fundamental part of repositioning the brand as a pan-European identity in an expanding market. Plus, since the first rounds clash with the World Cup we might make a few quid by trading on the Brazil part of our name and offering it for ambush advertising to Nike's rivals. "Just sell it", that's our motto.

Not that football is all about money, it's still about glory and

the love of the game. At least that's what it says in the preamble to our lottery submission for a retractable roof on the Old Cornfield. We are thinking of going into partnership with the local county cricket side and staging floodlit one-day matches. Come to think of it, we could have a benefit cricket match for Diedrie as well. What's Athier's number? He's a Manchester lad and he won't be too busy right now.

Sham Froue and Ivor Niggle are both out today, they're acting as my betting runners at Aintree. I let Fritz Unstanz take charge of the team but only after he promised not to play Duane Spice on the wing. Hope we win, but not in style.

PS: Congratulations to Bill Clinton. My lawyer says the collapse of Paula Jones' suit should help in three of the sexual harassment cases against me.

Barry Gaffer was talking to Glenn Moore

Wenger relishes long English stay

ARSENE WENGER'S love affair with the English game shows no sign of waning and why should it while he stands on the threshold of achieving something as essentially English as the Double?

But it is another romance, one even more elusive than the famed League and Cup Double, which has amazed even the most cynical. And that is his ongoing relationship with the English media.

The Arsenal manager has an affinity with them that some English managers would die for - and one or two have, figuratively speaking. They are no more likely to turn Wenger into a French onion soup, à la Graham Taylor, than they are to devour their own grandmothers, well mothers at least. Even the hardest-nosed hacks go all gooey-eyed at the mere sound of his dulcet French tones and when he told them this week what he wanted to stay in Eng-

land beyond the duration of his three-year contract at Arsenal, their delight was hard to conceal.

"We think you are a great bloke," said one.

"You've brought something new to the game here, have you taken anything from us, Arsène?" inquired another.

Even Wenger, who normally conceals his emotions rather well for a Frenchman, appeared moved. He replied that, indeed, he had; the English, of all people, had taught him about passion. There can be no denying Wenger's sincerity, he is deeply in love with the English game which clearly goes beyond his attachment to the Gunners. Now was not the time, though, to talk about contracts, or even the Double - "that's unprofessional" - but if Arsenal were to offer him a new contract at the end of the



French without tears: Arsène Wenger wants to stay in England Photograph: Daily Mirror

Wembley may lose foreign deal

By Stephen Vines in Hong Kong

WEMBLEY International, the overseas management arm of Wembley plc, which has just announced the sale of Wembley Stadium, is in danger of losing its largest foreign contract as moves have started to end its agreement to manage Hong Kong's 40,000-seater sports stadium.

Wembley won the contract, against strong competition, in March 1994, helping the parent company when its fortunes were at their lowest ebb. However, the contract has proved to be something of a nightmare and from the first day there have been problems with the pitch.

The owners of the stadium, the local urban council, said they were giving Wembley a "last chance" to get the pitch right six months ago. Ambrose Cheung, the chairman of the com-

pany which owns the stadium, said yesterday, "we thought we achieved a basis of understanding. We are being let down and we are disappointed by that".

The company is looking into ways of terminating Wembley's 10-year contract. Fred Li, a board member, said that court action was being considered.

The stadium is best known as the home of the Hong Kong International Rugby Sevens. However, when Manchester United played there last August, an official complaint was made about the state of the pitch.

Desperate to drum up business, Wembley tried to use the stadium for concerts. This soon degenerated into farce after noise complaints. At one concert pop fans were issued with gloves to dull their clapping. There was no response yesterday from Wembley's Hong Kong operations director, Marcus Carling.

Clive White on how a Frenchman has charmed his way into the media's notebooks

season? "If they want, why not?"

And if they don't? "I would accept that. I still need to work to survive. I cannot go fishing. If another club were interested..."

They were even putting him up for the England job, but he drew the line at that. "I would not say no, but I think in England it is important to be English for such a job and I wouldn't consider doing it here - unless I decided to stay for 10 to 15 years and I considered myself English."

In the meantime they could do worse than put him in charge of our 2006 World Cup bid. "If I want to make anyone happy, I invite them to an English game, just to experience the special spirit," he said. He had noticed it on his first visit here 20 years ago, and hoped then that he would one day work in England. "I was always a fanatic, but here you have the feeling that you are not the only one. The biggest passion is here. There is a respect for the fans which you don't find abroad."

There is also, of course, a special spirit among the Highbury players which Wenger, upon his arrival, had been anxious not to disturb. "I would say it is difficult to find that same togetherness at other big clubs, like Real Madrid or Inter, because they change the players every year or every other year. Patience at most clubs doesn't exist any more."

Because of that "togetherness," it had taken time for his French signings to become assimilated although, "I never thought there was a split in the camp. It's natural, the players already here had been together for 10 years - the French players had to prove they wanted to win just as much as them. They also had to adapt to the English game. At first they felt that the game should adapt to them."

Asked if Wembley conjured up for him the same romantic notions that it does for countless Englishmen, he came back quick as a flash: "We had very realistic ones because we tried to buy it."

Flowers to have operation

THE World Cup paths of Paul Scholes and Tim Flowers took contrasting turns yesterday, with the Manchester United midfielder escaping the surgeon's knife, while the Blackburn keeper had an exploratory operation.

Scholes, his club and England were relieved to find that his knee trouble was simply down to overuse which has responded to a less hectic schedule now United are out of the Champions' League.

However, Flowers, who should have been facing his England colleague in Monday's Premiership match at Ewood Park, may have to accept that his chances of playing in the World Cup finals in nine weeks' time are slim. His damaged shoulder was the subject of keyhole surgery yesterday and the full extent of the injury should be known within the next few days.

Alex Ferguson, the United

manager, confirmed that Scholes will not now need an operation at the end of the season. "The one game a week is helping and there's no great strain on him now as compared to the period when he was playing with the injury," Ferguson said. "That run of Saturday, Wednesday, Saturday just caught up with him."

United's other casualties - Peter Schmeichel (hamstring), Gary Pallister (back), Ryan Giggs (hamstring) and Nicky Butt (calf) - are all back in training and in contention for the trip to Blackburn. Teddy Sheringham is also available after a one-match ban.

The transfer of Georgi Kinkladze rests on the outcome of bagging between Manchester City and Ajax. City want £5.5m, while the Dutch side see the Georgian - valued at £10m a year ago - as more of a £3m player.

Bargain hunters should stay clear of Aston Villa, who have

placed a £4.5m price tag on the striker Savo Milosevic. "We've just written off £3m in selling Sasa Curcic [to Crystal Palace] and we don't intend to give Savo away," John Gregory, the Villa manager, said.

Colin Todd looks certain to be in trouble with the Football Association after criticising Premiership referees on a radio programme. "Referees have got to be fair and they have got to be honest, and I don't think a lot of them are at this moment in time," the Bolton manager said.

The Portsmouth chairman Martin Gregory has abandoned plans to sell the club to the American property developer Brian Wolanin and rock star Brian Howe, and announced he will invest £10m into the First Division club himself. Gregory now intends to buy land adjacent to Fratton Park and build a new 30,000 all-seater stadium.

SIDELINES

Wright revelled in right connections

One man, above all, would have revelled in the collision of Wolverhampton Wanderers and Arsenal in tomorrow's FA Cup semi-final.

The late Billy Wright loved and served both clubs; captaining Wolves to numerous triumphs, including the Cup win of 1949, before becoming manager of Arsenal, his boyhood heroes, for four years until 1966.

Late in his life Wright returned to Wolves as a director. A more volatile character who played alongside him in the old gold as well as for England, Eddie Clamp, also moved to Highbury but stayed only 10 months. Strange but true: his mother kept up the Molineux connection by washing the kit in the dark days of the mid-1980s.

Alan Sunderland, who scored Arsenal's last-gasp winner in the 1979 final, was a £240,000 buy from Wolves. The Gunners' phlegmatic goalkeeper in the Double-winning campaign of 1971, Bob Wilson of ITV fame, joined them from the Black Country club without a League game to his name. Two contemporaries, Bobby Gould and Bob McNab, made the opposite switch.

Bryn Jones cost Arsenal a world-record £14,000 from Wolves in 1938, while John Barnwell and Tommy Docherty both played for the former and managed the latter. Lately links include Ray Hankin, Vince Bartram and Jon Purdie, a winger released from Arsenal by the Wolverhampton-born Don Howe. Purdie made many goals for Steve Bull, also scoring spectacularly to seal Kidderminster's Cup upset at Birmingham four years ago.

Ten things that Leeds' Australian Harry Kewell might be missing today



- 1 His exciting birthplace, Smithfield. Home to the Dart Container Corporation, the world's largest producer of foam cups.
- 2 A healthy outdoor life.
- 3 A healthy dose of advertising censorship. Australian newspapers face £20,000 fines for printing any Formula 1 photographs that contain tobacco sponsorship logos.
- 4 Quest Australia. More Than Gold. Not an account of how Kewell prefers Leeds to his national Olympic side, but a Christian group planning free food at Sydney 2000.
- 5 Kangaroos - although there are wild wallabies in Cheshire and Derbyshire.
- 6 The £200,000 bronze mermaids being planned for Bondi beach.
- 7 Slabs of subsidies. Cases of small bottles of lager.
- 8 The National Dinosaur Museum in Ginninderra. Like Elland Road currently, not an exhibition of past greats, but interesting enough for the specialist.
- 9 Boomerangs. Return to their starting point as quickly as a Leeds plane.
- 10 Cooma centre. A ski resort (and just an absent 'o' from Elland Road.)

NAME OF THE GAME No 29: THE BAIRNS

Scottish football clubs have always had a liking for nicknames. Many, such as Falkirk's, come from local folklore. Anyone born in Falkirk Royal Infirmary, or indeed anywhere else in the town, is known locally as a "Bairn", or child.

THIS WEEK

On 4 April 1936, the finalists for that year's FA Cup final were already known, and the participants, one from the top division and one from the tier below, were involved in important League matches.

First Division Arsenal took on Brentford at home, and considering the Gunners were missing a number of players to the England side (who drew 1-1 with Scotland at Wembley the same day), they were lucky to come away with a 1-1 draw. The result took them to fifth in the table behind Sunderland, Derby, Stoke and Huddersfield.

HISTORY LESSON

Arsenal's FA Cup semi-final against Wolves at Villa Park tomorrow will stir memories of their meeting at the same ground at the same stage 19 years ago. Arsenal won 2-0, with goals by Alan Sunderland and Frank Stapleton, then beat Manchester United 3-2 in a memorable final.

Sunderland, who moved to Arsenal from Molineux played for Wolves in another FA Cup tie between the two clubs six years earlier.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s a short-lived experiment saw beaten semi-finalists meet in a play-off for third and fourth place in the Cup.

In 1973 Arsenal and Wolves - with Sunderland in their line-up - contested their FA Cup play-off at Highbury in August a week before the start of the following season. A crowd of 21,038 saw Wolves win 3-1 with goals by Derek Dougan (two) and Jim McCalliog. Brian Horneby replying for Arsenal.

A week later, Wolves opened their League campaign with a home win over Norwich by the same margin and with the same scorers.

THIS WEEK'S TRANSFERS

Transfers
Steven Tosh (midfielder) St. Johnstone to Rotherham (£250,000); Greg Miller (midfielder) Hibernian to Livingston (nominal fee); Billy Finlay (midfielder) Kilmarnock to Ayr (nominal fee).

Loans
Kevin Pilkington (goalkeeper) Manchester Utd to Colchester; Jason Blunt (midfielder) Leeds Utd to Rotherham; Paul Shephard (forward) Rovers to Salford.

Leeds Utd to Ayr: Wayne Cini (midfielder) Blackpool to Dundee Utd; Lindsey Hamilton (goalkeeper) Queens Park to Partick Thistle; Steve Mackenzie (forward) Livingston to Cowdenbeath; Andy McConville (goalkeeper) Celtic to Arbroath; Brian McLaughlin (forward) Celtic to Alloa; David Ross (forward) Inverness Caledonian Thistle to Ross County; Wayne Addicott (forward) Inverness Caledonian Thistle to Ross County; Kevin Thomas (forward) Hearts to Stirling Albion.

Contributors: Phil Shaw, Nick Harris, Paul Newman
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Davidson wants to put City's name up in lights

FAN'S EYE VIEW NO 248

BRISTOL CITY BY DAVE MASSEY

BRISTOL is the largest English city not to have a Premiership club, yet the footballing fortunes of its two teams are on the up. Today's local derby pits the Reds (City) against the Gas (Rovers) with both sides being the top scorers in the Second Division.

City's improved fortunes are linked to the ascendancy to the chairmanship of Scott Davidson, which has finalised a close link between "star" supporters and local showbiz. Celebrity fans range from the sublime (3D and Grant from Massive Attack) to the "ridiculous" (Tony "Baldric" Robinson) and Channel 5's Jonathan Pearce.

Davidson was previously a session musician with Eighties popsters Bros and the Put Shop Boys, before setting

up a profitable *Loot*-style trade paper and selling up two years ago for a tasty sum. This enabled him to fulfil a lifelong dream of close involvement with City, and his fierce ambition and desire for a "culture of success" shines through the club that has always been regarded as a "sleeping giant".

He has had a crash course in hands-on chairmanship in the last two years - negotiating a buy-out of the rump of the old Board; dealing with the aftermath of the crowd invasion in the Sky televised Bristol derby match in December 1996; the "easing out" of the previous manager, Joe Jordan; and preparation for a successful promotion campaign in a Centenary 97-98 season.

Jordan's replacement,

John Ward, has continued a tradition in recent years of former Rovers managers making an impact at Ashton Gate. The former Leeds and England full-back, Terry Cooper, took City out of the old Fourth Division and to a successful Wembley appearance in the Freight Rover Trophy final in 1986.

This season, after a shaky start, Ward has put together a winning and entertaining blend of youth and experience. There has been a heartening influx of local lads into the team - the pint-sized bundle of determination, Tom Doherty, the classy centre-back, Louis Carey, and mercurial midfielder, Matt Hewlett - who have made a major impact.

These and other youngsters waiting in the wings

have reflected the board's emphasis on youth, and the appointment last season of David Burnside, the former FA youth director, set out that commitment. From this promising beginning it looks as if City will be the only club in the South-west to have "Academy" status.

City also have a creative Caribbean connection in top scorer and Bermudian, Shaun Goater, and the shifty dribbling skills of Barbadian, Gregory Goodridge (via Torquay and QPR). These two players have been the best crowd-pleasers for several years since the dazzling and much loved Pole, "Jackie" Dziekanowski, and the lightning pace and predatory goal poaching of Andy Cole combined sweetly up front.

We also have the most

appropriately named physio in football, Buster Footman. This man is a legend, from his ever-ready good humour, to his unbelievable ability to survive sub-zero temperatures wearing a short-sleeved T-shirt. His exploits have been so keenly watched that he has been granted his own column in the match day programme.

The Robins' top position and near certain promotion gives the club a great chance to build for the future. It is a far cry from the sad statistics of three consecutive relegations in the early Eighties, which brought City close to bankruptcy and put it in the limelight only for negative reasons. This time around it looks as if Davidson and his colleagues are hitting the right notes.



From Fever Pitch to Uruguayan eclecticism football's an open book



OLIVIA BLAIR

ON HOW THE NATIONAL GAME HAS BECOME A PUBLISHING PHENOMENON

WITH 67 days to go, Rio Ferdinand looks to be going to the World Cup. The nearest thing to Bobby Moore since Bobby Moore delivered another cool defensive display against Leeds on Monday and the following day gave an assured performance at the launch of *The Official Team England World Cup Squad Book*, signing copies like a pro. That he was the one England player chosen to be there suggests he will also be there - or thereabouts - in France.

Ferdinand is not noted for being as lucid off the park as he is fluid on it, but he did manage to plug the book eloquently enough, as one "packed with facts and figures on this year's World Cup which will help any kid enjoy the full 90 minutes but also last well into injury time".

And so it should, at £7.99 for 80, admittedly action-packed, pages. However, like England

in the real thing, this FA (and, er, BP) endorsed guide faces stiff competition. There are (at least) 20 such guides in the offing (not counting those that will appear attached to magazines and cereal packets) and a further 10 (at least) World Cup-oriented books, all expected to jump on the same crowded bandwagon to France.

Not a lot really, compared to the 180 publications that are due to flood the French market, but then this World Cup represents an unprecedented opportunity for French publishers to sink their studs into a previously untapped audience.

Football books are small fry in France - a few annuals and Rothmans-type guides are published each season - but biographies are as rare as a David Ginola international appearance. Before Eric Cantona's, you have to go back to 1989 when Michel Platini pub-

lished his autobiography, *Ma Vie Comme Un Ballon* to find one worth its salt. Evidently, the likes of Zinedine Zidane have less to say than say, Les Ferdinand. Or perhaps they just let their football do the talking.

The English market is a different kettle of fish (or trawler of sardines, as Cantona might say). Like the game itself, football book publishing in this country has gone from strength to strength during the Nineties, and the bubble shows no sign of bursting.

Last year alone, around 600 football books were published by a variety of publishers ranging from major players such as Headline, HarperCollins and Andre Deutsch (who have exclusive rights on Manchester United publications) to the smaller publishers like Mainstream and Boree (who are on Chelsea's books, so to speak). Of course, *Fever Pitch* set the

ball rolling in 1992, spawning a generation of cult books but inadvertently paving the way for a plethora of glossy commercial spin-offs and over-hyped autobiographies that are seldom as polished as their subjects. If Mark Hughes, for instance, is a scorer of great goals rather than a great goalscorer (as he was once described) then his autobiography, *Sparky*, is a book about a great footballer rather than a great football book. Likewise, Gary McAllister's *Captain's Log* is an uninspiring book about an inspirational player.

Of course there are exceptions. Like *Jack Charlton: The Autobiography*, Garry Nelson's *Left Foot Forward* and *The Hand of God*, whose subject needs no introduction. But while these books mean big money (Alex Ferguson has signed the biggest football publishing deal in history for his autobiography,

worth a reputed £1m and a captive audience, they tend to be long on clichés, short on revelations. Surely the idea is to write a book, only if you've got a story to tell.

Thankfully, some players do have scruples on such matters; John Wark apparently declined to write his autobiography because he didn't have enough beans to spit. But it is generally the more innovative and original titles that stand out; like Simon Kuper's *Football Against The Enemy* and *Football In Sun And Shadow*, an eclectic celebration of football penned by Uruguayan Eduardo Galeano.

Not that the Uruguayans are known for their predilection towards football books. Not one was published to commemorate the first World Cup in that country, dingo 1934 in Italy. The only recognised book on the 1938 World Cup, written in French, recently

fetches £350, while the first in English on the World Cup was a paperback potted history published for the 1954 finals, is now worth £130.

Whether a book becomes a collector's item depends on many factors, not least the number of copies printed. Hence the reason copies of the 1995 "classic" on Gillingham, *The Home of The Shouting Men* - of which only a few thousand copies were printed - now fetches six times its original £25 cover price.

The first edition of *Fever Pitch* is already worth £35, and the latest edition still features in the sports bestseller lists. According to the specialist bookshop Sportspages - and rather depressingly in the light of last Saturday's events - the current bestsellers include *Ginors*, the story of a Moss Side hooligan gang leader which is banned by every club in the

country, and *Derby Days* by those reformed hooligans, the Brimston brothers.

Their publishers, Mainstream, claim that the brothers make no excuse for their subject matter, as ex-hugs they can, apparently, provide an objective insight into hooliganism. Mainstream's biggest selling football book to date remains Ally McCoist's autobiography *Top Man* (40,000 copies).

But Mainstream's MD, Bill Campbell, admits that while the business is thriving - enough to justify a new sports paperback imprint which will publish six new paperback titles a month - the business is more precarious than it looks. "We can talk a good game now," he says, "but one doggy night against Tunisia, and suddenly there's not such a good story to tell." Right now, however, there has never been a better time to read all about it.

Chelsea haunted by Italian supremacy

The portents are not good for England's last team in Europe, writes Glenn Moore

TUCKED into their corner of the Stadio Romeo Monti the Chelsea fans taunted those supporters of other English clubs watching on Channel 5.

"One team in Europe, only one team in Europe," went the cry. Had they been patriotic, they inclined the Vicenza fans that surrounded them on Thursday night could have replied with the Italian equivalent of: "Four teams in Europe, we've got four teams in Europe."

Four winning teams as well. Vicenza, Juventus, Internazionale and Lazio were all victorious in their first legs of European semi-finals this week. Vicenza defeated Chelsea in the European Cup-Winners' Cup, Juventus thrashed Monaco in the European Cup and, in the UEFA Cup, Lazio won away to Atletico Madrid and Internazionale at home to Spartak Moscow.

Italian clubs have dominated Europe ever since English teams were banned in the wake of the Haysel disaster. Of the 36 trophies contested since they

have won 12 and competed in a staggering 23 finals. The rate has even improved since English clubs returned in 1991. Juventus and Lazio are already favourites to add to that tally this year and, though Chelsea are confident of overhauling Thursday's 1-0 deficit at Stamford Bridge in a fortnight - and becoming only England's fourth finalist in that time - Vicenza cannot be written off.

Vicenza's win encapsulated many of the reasons for Italy's success in European club competition. They had, as George Graham once said lovingly of Milan, "good players working hard". Vicenza were billed as a team without stars and it is true they had no familiar names and only one foreigner in the 18-man squad, the Uruguayan right-back Gustavo Meuzer.

But they still had good players - with Lamberto Zauli's ball control, as he outwitted three Chelsea defenders to score the only goal, illustrative of the quality of technique. The tireless work of the wide men,



Latin celebration: Vicenza's players run towards their supporters after their 1-0 victory over Chelsea on Thursday

Photograph: AP

Marco Scazzardi and Gabriele Ambrosetti, typified the side's grafting qualities.

The irony for many English observers is that the strengths of Vicenza and many other Italian sides - organisation, balance, patience and hard work - is reminiscent of the Liverpool and Nottingham Forest sides that once dominated Europe. The 4-4-2 formation and pressing game now so familiar in Serie A was once the *modus operandi* of the English clubs when they ruled the roost.

Now Chelsea, with their multi-national side, switch from

one style to another as their play-manager Gianluca Vialli seeks a way of combining the 4-3-3 shape he knew at Juventus with his personnel.

Thursday's attempt did not work and it also upset two key players, Dan Petrescu and Gianfranco Zola, both of whom were asked to play out of position in a wide attacking role. Their contrasting responses - Zola working hard in vain, Petrescu only showing passion when substituted - were indicative of their different personalities but each revealed the need for Vialli to get his tactics

right and the incompatibility of his nice-guy approach to the realities of management.

While Petrescu stormed off angrily when replaced Zola, so desperate for an impressive performance in his homeland to lift his World Cup chances, Vialli having said the Russian plays League games and the Dutchman cup matches.

This policy is thought to be motivated in part by a desire to discover, before the end of the season, whether Kharine has fully recovered from his lengthy knee injury. However, as goal-

keeping coach, Eddie Niedzwiecki, admitted on the flight back, "The situation is not ideal and it's going to come to a head sooner or later."

De Goeij himself said: "It is frustrating and I'm not happy about it. I've never been in a situation like this before." Given De Goeij's form, and Vicenza's sharpness on the counter-attack, it would seem the Dutchman must play beforehand, if not at Derby then at home to Tottenham on 11 April.

And Vicenza, "To be honest, I think we will win," said Zola. Chelsea will have to play better to do so.

Major weekend fixtures and pools check

TODAY

3.0 unless stated

FA Cup

Aspen Vale v West Ham

Leeds v Barnsley

Leicester v Coventry

1 Sheffield Wed v Southampton

2 Tottenham v Everton

Wimbledon v Bolton

National League

First Division

3 Bury v Huddersfield

4 Manchester City v Stockport

5 Norwich v Bradford City

6 Port Vale v Oxford United

7 Portsmouth v Birmingham

8 Reading v Stoke City

9 Swindon v Charlton

10 West Brom v Middlesbrough

Second Division

11 Blackpool v Walsley

12 Bournemouth v Wycombe

13 Bristol City v Carlisle

14 Fulham v Preston

15 Grimsby v Gillingham

16 Luton v York

17 Millwall v Bristol Rovers

18 Northampton v Burnley

19 Oldham v Plymouth

20 Wigan v Walsley

21 Wrexham v Bradford

Third Division

22 Brighton v Southport

23 Darlington v Barnet

24 Doncaster v Hull

25 Exeter v Chester

26 Hartlepool v Cambridge

27 Leyton Orient v Mansfield

28 Macclesfield v Lincoln

29 Notts Forest v Shrewsbury

30 Torquay v Bideley

Tennents Scottish Cup

Semi-final

Falkirk v Hearts

(at Ibrox Park, Glasgow)

Bell's Scottish League

Premier Division

Aberdeen v St Johnstone

Dundee United v Dundee

First Division

Airdrie v Dundee

21 Raith v Morton

32 St Mirren v Hamilton

Second Division

33 Brechin v Stenhousemuir

Inverness CT v Forth

34 Livingston v Clyde

35 Stirling v Dumbarton

Third Division

Albion Rovers v Arbroath

Alloa v Ross County

36 Cowdenbeath v Brecknock

37 Dumbarton v East Stirling

38 Montrose v Queen's Park

GM Vauxhall Conference

39 Halifax v Woking

Hednesford v Gateshead

40 Leam v Yeovil

Northampton v Hayes

41 Stalybridge v Harrogate

Stalybridge v Kettering

Telford v Rushden

42 Welling v Morecambe

Dr Maroons Premier

43 Bath v Atherton

44 Cambridge City v Dorchester

45 Crawley v Kings Lynn

46 Hastings v Grays

47 Haverhill v St Leonards

48 Rothwell v Ashford

49 Salisbury v Bromsgrove

TOMORROW

FA Cup semi-finals

Wolves v Arsenal (2.0)

(at Villa Park, Birmingham)

Sheff Wed v Newcastle (3.0)

(at Old Trafford, Manchester)

FA Cup Premier

Derby v Chelsea (3.0)

National League

First Division

Notts Forest v Woking (2.05)

Tennents Scottish Cup

Semi-final

Rangers v Celtic (5.0)

(at Parkhead, Glasgow)

Bell's Scottish League

Second Division

Queen of South v East Fife (3.0)

By David McKinney

IN THE West End of Edinburgh they are beginning to talk about success where before they whispered.

For a generation, supporters of Heart of Midlothian have lived in hope of landing one of Scottish football's prizes; they have dreamed of new heroes to idolise and of an open-top bus picking its way through the crowd along Gorgie Road.

There was only black and white television the last time that happened. Hearts, it seems, have played for years in black and white, always losers with only flashes of colour in their seasons.

In 1986 they came within 15 minutes of a title win and they have lost a Scottish Cup final in every decade - in 1968, '76, '86 and '96 - since they last won the trophy in 1956.

This week as they sit on the verge of a possible League and Cup double, the majority of the supporters would hedge their bets and hope for one trophy.

Not so Jim Jefferies, the manager. "We're greedy. We want both," he said. "Getting one would be major progress for the club, but if you are in the hunt for two trophies you want to win them both."

Jefferies, who was a sturdy defender for Hearts in his play-

ing days, has slowly produced a blend of useful exuberance allied with experience that has made Hearts as potent a force this season as either Celtic or Rangers. Seven of their players were recently called up for international duty for Scotland.

They face Falkirk at Ibrox today in the first of the weekend's Scottish Cup semi-finals, a collection of Scots, Frenchmen and an Austrian.

Having lost in the final two years ago, Hearts are hoping to go one step further, but they will not underestimate their First Division opponents, who were last year's beaten finalists.

"They have a lot of good, ex-

perienced players who have been in the Premier League and had a great Cup run last year," Jefferies said. "We'll be treating this just like a Premier League match."

Falkirk will revel in the underdog role they know so well. Alex Tait, their manager, watched them lift the Scottish Cup in 1957 and hopes to take the club he supported as a boy back to the final.

"Last season we beat Dundee, Raith and Celtic of the Premier Division," he said. "No one gave us a chance against Celtic in the semi-final, so we know cup-ties are all about what you do on the day."

Further motivation for the club will come from a balance sheet that shows debts of £1.5m. Falkirk are in preliminary liquidation and it could be literally a final appearance in May.

Totten's team have responded well since the day they were given the option of taking their boots home and seeing the doors close behind them or fighting on. "The situation has given the players a stronger bond," he said.

Celtic go into tomorrow's game at Parkhead attempting to end a 73-year wait by beating Rangers in a Scottish Cup semi-final. The two have met only three times at this stage in the

last 50 years, but the Ibrox club have won on each occasion.

There is little doubt that Rangers are hitting form at the right time, with Ally McCoist the prime motivator.

"Four or five weeks ago you could sense the boys were low in terms of morale, but we have now got ourselves together," he said. "We had a little bit of a get-together and a chat. But we are not the finished article yet. That's why Celtic have to be the favourites."

Walter Smith, the manager, suggested that there would be little psychological advantage to be gained in the first of a double header, with the two sides meeting in the league the following

Sunday. "I don't think it makes much difference," he said. "I don't think it is wise to think too much about the next game because all you can do is focus on the day and try to be successful."

Wim Jansen, the Celtic coach, will be without Stéphane Mabe, the French defender who will miss the rest of the season with a knee injury, while Mornen Wieghorst is suspended.

Having already lifted the Coca-Cola Cup, Celtic are on course for the treble. "We are now approaching the whole run-in and what is at the end of it and the rewards that are there are huge," midfielder Paul Lambert said.

Bayern admit to spying on one of their players



FOOTBALL AROUND THE WORLD
BY RUPERT METCALF

Germany

THE tabloid newspaper *Bild* ran a front-page story on Wednesday which many readers apparently thought was an April Fool's joke.

It alleged that Bayern Munich had employed a private detective to spy on the lifestyle of their international midfielder, Mario Basler. To the embarrassment of the powerful *Bundesliga* club, though, the story was at least partly true.

"It was not a detective," Bayern's press officer, Markus Hörwick, said. "One of our

employees simply checked how late Basler returned home."

Bayern's general manager, Uli Hoeses, said: "Sometimes young people have to be looked after. I don't regard this as an unusual measure."

Asked if he had been upset to have somebody watching over him, Basler said: "That was not a problem. While he was around, I always went to bed at 11pm."

Japan/South Korea

FIFA, world football's ruling body, this week denied a report

suggesting that South Korea and Japan wanted to delay the start of the 2002 World Cup finals to avoid playing during the June-July rainy season.

"It's not true at all," Keith Cooper, a FIFA spokesman, said. "We don't know anything about it." An American news agency had earlier quoted the South Korean prime minister as saying local World Cup organisers were discussing with FIFA the possibility of delaying the finals until September.

Fifa were reported to be positive about the proposal - but Cooper ruled that out ab-

solutely. He insisted there had been no discussion with either South Korea or Japan on the subject. "We play in June and July," he said. "That is when the players are available."

Cameroon

ONE man's name was conspicuous by its absence when Cameroon unveiled their new coaching set-up this week.

Roger Milla, the talismanic former national team centre-forward, was a man of mystery at the African Nations Cup in February. He arrived in Burk-

ina Faso claiming he was just on a scouting mission for the French club, Montpellier, but he was seen going into the Cameroon dressing-room at every match. Sources close to the team said that he had even been giving team talks.

However, there was no official job for Milla this week. The outgoing coach, Jean Onguene, has been demoted to No 2 to the new coach, Claude Le Roy, who returns for his second spell in charge. Another Frenchman, Pierre Makowsky, is the fitness trainer while Thomas N'Kono is the new goalkeeping coach.

67 days until the start of the World Cup finals...

EVEN if he watches his side lift the World Cup at the Stade de France in July, it seems that Argentina's coach, Daniel Passarella, will be looking for new employers later in the summer.

Passarella said this week that he is unlikely to stay in Argentina. "Once the World Cup is over, I'll probably work for some European club," he said.

Passarella was the captain of Argentina's 1978 World Cup-winning side and took over the coaching job after the 1994 tournament. He made his name as the coach of the Buenos Aires club River Plate, leading them to two national titles. Having largely maintained discipline among his volatile squad, he is unlikely to be short of offers.

Blades cut a dash for the romantics

By Phil Shaw



IN THE 18 years since a team from the second tier of English football has won the FA Cup, the gulf in resources and quality between the Premiership and the First Division has reputedly widened to the extent that a final between Arsenal and Newcastle United ought to be a formality on 16 May.

Fortunate for all who look to the Cup as the last refuge of romance in an era of rampant commercialism, two Nationwide League clubs have proved that status and reputations still count for little or nothing in knock-out competition.

Sheffield United, who last lifted the trophy in 1925, qualified for tomorrow's semi-final with Newcastle at Old Trafford by virtue of coming through two matches against Coventry and Wolverhampton Wanderers, who have not taken the prize since 1969, earned a noon date with Arsenal at Villa Park despite being drawn away to Wimbledon and Leeds in previous rounds.

Although the needle would go off the footballing Richter scale if the games produced the first-ever final without a team from the top section, there must be a strong possibility of at least one of the underdogs reaching Wembley.

The feeling that Sheffield United have a better chance than Wolves is based as much on the merits of

their respective opponents as on their own capabilities. Put bluntly, the Blades may never come across a more vulnerable Newcastle outfit. By contrast, Arsenal tackle Wolves in peak form if not at full strength.

Curiously, three of the teams will be playing for the credibility and possibly the jobs of their managers. Steve Thompson's priority at Sheffield

United, where he is officially in charge until the end of the season, is promotion via the play-offs. Yet a trip to Wembley in the Cup would make him virtually unassailable.

The position of Mark McGhee, who is apparently no closer to ending Wolves' exile from the top flight, could become untenable unless he has a final appearance to fall back on. And even Kenny Dalglish, whose career is littered with honours, will come under pressure should Newcastle pass up the chance to redeem a wretched season.

On paper, a Newcastle team sixth from bottom in the Premiership should have too much power and class for the side sixth from top in the First. If, for example, Alan Shearer were at his best, it would be hard to see Sheffield living with them.

The signs are, however, that Shearer has not regained the sharpness he had before his most recent injury. His colleagues have also been playing with a lack of spirit that may owe something to the furore created by the shenanigans of two directors.

Falling behind could find their morale wanting, and in the likes of Dean Saunders and Graham Stuart, the ebullient Thompson possesses players capable of taking advantage of and thriving on the atmosphere. In the underrated Alan Kelly, he may also have the better goalkeeper.

Wolves, meanwhile, are heart-

ened by the likelihood that both Marc Overmars and Ian Wright will be absent from Arsenal's line-up, along with the suspended Dennis Bergkamp. "We've got to concede that they've got better players than us," McGhee said, a statement that perhaps owed as much to candour as to ideology. "The more that are missing, the better for us."

McGhee, who performed the considerable feat of outwitting George Graham tactically in the quarter-final, said he had devised a strategy for doing the same to Arsène Wenger. This may involve using three central defenders, with Steve Sedgley and Dean Richards forming a formidable barrier around Keith Curle.

"It won't just be about stopping them, but if we go out there without finding ways of combating them, they'll beat us." Asked to elaborate, he promised: "We're not going to string 11 people across our goal line." Nine or 10 might be another matter.

It is unthinkable that Steve Bull will not at least take part as a substitute. If Wolves lost without the fans' idol being involved, McGhee could probably clear his desk on Monday. They may actually have the edge in attack, where Wenger is placing a heavy burden on the inexperienced shoulders of Nicolas Anelka and Christopher Wreh, but in midfield and defence the balance is tilted firmly the other way.

Arsenal v Wolves		
Last five League matches		
D W W W W		W D L W D
Top scorers		
Dennis Bergkamp 19		Dougie Freedman 12
Wolves are hopeful that Keith Curle and Don Goodman will be fit after being rested in midweek. Simon Osborn is suspended. Neil Embien is cup-tied and David Connolly still has not received international clearance from Feyenoord. Veteran striker Steve Bull is likely to start on the bench. Arsenal's Ian Wright is virtually certain to be missing with a groin injury, while Dennis Bergkamp is suspended and Marc Overmars, who has a bruised ankle, has been given no better than a 50-50 chance. But Gilles Grimandi should be fit to replace full-back Lee Dixon, who is out for another two weeks with hamstring trouble.		
Referee: S J Lodge (Barnsley)		

Newcastle v Sheffield Utd		
Last five League matches		
D D L L D		E W D W L
Top scorers		
Gary Speed 8		Dean Saunders 12
Blades' keeper Alan Kelly is to play after shaking off the effects of a bruised rib, while defenders Chris Smith and Roger West, who have played since the replay, will undergo late fitness tests on hamstring and tail injuries respectively. Newcastle are without Stuart Pearce and Stephen Hendrie, who both have hamstring injuries, and a third full-back, Andy Collins. Arsenal's Ian Wright is hopeful of being fit after missing his last match, but a hamstring injury has kept him out of the last two games. Newcastle's Alan Kelly is to play after shaking off the effects of a bruised rib, while defenders Chris Smith and Roger West, who have played since the replay, will undergo late fitness tests on hamstring and tail injuries respectively.		

Toon Army turn on 'clueless, dreadful, boring' King Kenny

The roundheads have replaced Keegan's cavaliers at Newcastle and the rapport between manager Kenny Dalglish (right) and the club's fans is at an all-time low.

Guy Hodgson went in search of FA Cup fever on Tyneside - but found only the chill of discontent



IT DID not take a fanciful mind to draw a parallel with the splendid building that looms over Newcastle United's training ground and the man who was speaking. Lumley Castle's battlements, Kenny Dalglish's words. It was hard to discern which was the more resistant to intruders.

He sat in the classic defensive pose, arms crossed, beating away the media with a politician's tongue. This was Newcastle's pre-FA Cup semi-final open morning, but the portcullis was down, the drawbridge up and the only things coming out were arrows of obfuscation.

Would the team be staying away to prepare for tomorrow's match against Sheffield United? "We always go away to prepare for away matches. Yeah we'll go away." Tonight? "No." Tomorrow? "I'm not going to tell you. We'll prepare the best way we think fit."

The more time you spent in Newcastle this week the greater you realised that Dalglish has become the focus of debate in the city. Few supporters warm to their manager whose public wariness appears to have been transmuted to the style on the field. "Boring", "dreadful", "clueless" were three of the printable words used to describe the team. Not so much Cup fever had spread as amazement that a commonly conceived side of automatons has got anywhere near Wembley.

"Don't get me wrong," one supporter dressed in a replica shirt said outside the club's souvenir shop at St James' Park. "I'm happy, no proud, that Newcastle are in the semi-finals of the FA Cup, but why couldn't it have been Kevin Keegan's team? They'd have set Wembley alight. Dalglish will send the country to sleep."

Others spoke of tomorrow's

match as being Dalglish's last chance. That if he fails to get Newcastle to their first final since 1974, the tenuous link between manager and supporter, which has never widened to more than a thread, will be irreparably broken. Few semi-final managers have had as much at stake as Dalglish has at Old Trafford.

An unexpected outcome of the furore surrounding the disgraced erstwhile directors, Freddie Shepherd and Douglas Hall has not been a release of pent-up discontent. Like the French Revolution, one grievance cleared seems to have merely opened the eyes to others. The character of Dalglish, or rather his team, has become an issue running alongside the road to Wembley.

"This is my first semi-final," Mark Jensen, editor of the Newcastle fanzine, *The Mag*, said, "and when I used to dream of what it would be like

it was nothing like this. The spectre of relegation from the Premiership has put a different light on things.

"I'm sure the atmosphere will be terrific on the day but so far, with so much else going on, it hasn't been feverish. People have been distracted. Certainly it's not been a charge at the FA Cup final, it's been more of a plod."

That slog has been most apparent in the League where the laughing, off-the cuff, cavaliers of Keegan have been replaced with stone-faced roundheads. Which would be tolerated if the team were successful, but they have not won any of their last seven Premiership matches and are only five points above the relegation places.

"The rest of the season doesn't bear thinking about if we don't get the right result on Sunday," Jensen said. "Last August we began full of excitement, we were in the

Champions' League and expectations were high. It was onwards and upwards. Being on the edge of the relegation zone never came into the equation.

"The feelings about Dalglish are very mixed. There are people who wouldn't be upset if he left tomorrow, but the majority are looking for him to turn things round. People know he's had problems, but the simple fact is the football is terrible. The League table does not lie."

Jensen is not one who subscribes to the theory that Dalglish will go if Newcastle lose tomorrow, if only because, with seven matches to go and the transfer deadline past, a change of manager would be pointless.

"He probably has until Christmas," he said. "If we stay up I think people will reserve judgement until the start of next season when they'll see if the players he has brought gel

People were prepared to sacrifice a little bit of excitement of the Keegan years to get a successful team, but there has been little evidence of improvement."

Which made Dalglish's reticence this week more strange. Here was a chance to toss aside the barriers that appear to have grown between the club and the fans and embrace them. They could have prepared at the Durham training ground where thousands used to throng to witness the Keegan revolution, but chose instead to cling to the security of Chester-le-Street's Riverside complex. On Thursday just two people watched Alan Shearer and co practise. A chance lost, just as the press conference probably laid waste more bridges than those it intended to build.

Friends say Dalglish is wonderful company and has a mischievous sense of humour but it is hard to find under the lay-

ers of armour. A glimpse came when he talked about Robert Lee's injury. "He's got a hamstring problem," he said, "which is a surprise because it usually only affects quick players."

"Good story," someone said at which point the steel door slammed shut. "He's heard it before," Dalglish replied, quick as a flash with the put-down.

This week Nicky Marker, a Sheffield United player who worked under Dalglish at Blackburn Rovers, could not have been more effusive about his manager. "I could never find a bad word about him," he said. "I remember once my child was ill and taken to hospital but as soon as Kenny found out: he pulled me out of the game and told me to go home. He is different class, always will be."

Loved by his players, cold and aloof to the people who could transmit that affection to a wider audience. "Is that it," he asked as the press confer-

ence stalled to a halt. "No problem." With that he left leaving bemusement and anger behind him.

No problem? Downstairs a member of the media let rip at Newcastle's public relations officer. "That was a disgrace and I'll be writing to the chairman to tell him so. The sooner he [Dalglish] is out of this club the better."

At the moment we are not at the final chance, but semi-final is apposite in more ways than one. A joke, printed in the Newcastle *Evening Chronicle* this week illustrated the distance between manager and fan. "Dalglish went into a pub one day," it read, "found it was happy hour and walked out."

Local papers do not print things like that unless a gap has grown. The Newcastle supporters need Dalglish to find them some happy hours. Otherwise the split will become permanent.

Unlikely talisman looking for an unlikely finale



Claridge: A 'strange old year'

Photograph: Peter Jay

STEVE CLARIDGE was seething. For 84 minutes on a freezing afternoon he had shuffled up and down the touchline, stretching and watching the clock, restless for a piece of the action. When a substitute for an injured attacker was finally required, a teenage rookie was summoned instead.

In the aftermath of Leicester's 4-0 victory over Northampton, Claridge could not focus beyond his frustration. Tomorrow, as he emerges from the tunnel before Wolves' FA Cup semi-final against Arsenal at Villa Park, he will be seeing things in a different light.

Martin O'Neill's decision to ignore him in that third-round tie may have been prompted by the belief that his transfer value would be greater if he was not cup-tied. Whatever the reason, any resentment Claridge may have felt has given way to relief and gratitude.

"I was cursing the manager at the time," he admitted. "Apart from anything else it cost me a win bonus! Now I'm starting to think it was something to do with fate. I hardly play for six months, then suddenly I'm one game from Wembley. It could probably only happen to me."

The feeling that destiny may be at work stems from the extraordinary transformation in his fortunes over the past two years. Not so long ago he seemed likely to play out his days in the lower divisions, as well known for his gambling habit or for the trademark shirt outside the shorts and rolled-down socks as for his talent.

Then he scored the last-gasp goal which settled the play-off final and swept Leicester into the Premiership. And for his next trick he hurried the winner in the Coca-Cola Cup final to earn them a place in Europe. In his autobiography, the

The self-deprecating Steve Claridge is Wolves' new folk hero. Phil Shaw reports.

entertaining *Tales From the Boot Camps*, Claridge expressed delight and disbelief at his metamorphosis from journeyman to talisman. "The way my career's going," he said, "I'll sign for Manchester United on my 40th birthday."

In fact he will be 32 next week, a landmark he expected to reach either in the lower First Division or in limbo at Leicester. But Portsmouth, where he was on loan last month (he even followed them to Sunderland as a fan a fortnight ago), could not raise the £350,000 O'Neill wanted. Mark McGhee, unhappy with his team's scoring rate, bought him on deadline day.

Wolves, having used 35 players this season, bear an unexpected resemblance to Birmingham when Claridge

served under Barry Fry. In those chaotic days, so many players poured over a hill at training camp that he likened the scene to something out of *Zulu*. At Molineux, there are a staggering 12 strikers alone with senior experience.

They include Steve Bull, the folk hero whose place in the pecking order appears to have been taken by the newcomer. Claridge confessed to feeling slightly guilty, as if he has jumped on someone else's bandwagon. "I'm Johnny-come-lately," he said. "It's like gatecrashing a party and nicking the best girl, though perhaps it's just as well I've arrived so late in Wolves' Cup run. With my record in this competition, we'd probably have been out by now if I'd been here earlier."

Claridge, who has already impressed as Wolves' finest back-to-goal forward since Andy Mutch, is similarly self-mocking about his recent brushes with Arsenal. "At Leicester we were 2-0 down when I was taken off and we drew 3-3," he recalled. "Then at Highbury we were two down, I came off and we got one back. Not great omens."

"They're probably the most difficult opponents you could draw. Ask any striker which defence he'd rather not face and it would probably be Arsenal. I was talking to someone who knows Tony Adams very well and he said that Tony reckons he's playing better than ever... not what you want to hear!"

Their back four are all on each other's wavelength, but it's not just them. The two lads in midfield who sit just in front of the defence. (Patrick Vieira and Emmanuel Petit, do a very important job.)

While Arsène Wenger's polyglot band have been busying themselves with Manchester United's lead in the Premiership, Wolves' play-off hopes hang by a thread. It looks like a mismatch. Claridge, however, has been around too long to let professional respect spill over into inhibiting fear.

"They wouldn't have been very impressed at all by us in the two matches I've played. But nothing that's gone on before has any bearing whatsoever on an occasion like this. It's a cliché, I know, but anything can happen in the Cup. If Wolves played them 10 times, Arsenal would probably win nine. But we have to believe that Sunday could be the one they don't win."

"It has been 'a strange old year,'" said Claridge, not to mention a strange old month. Given the way things tend to happen when he is around, it could get far stranger yet.

Kendall waits for late fillip from Ferguson

HOWARD KENDALL must rue the February day when he said that a sound defeat had been a good way to motivate his flagging side.

On that occasion, the Everton manager said that being left at the bottom of the Premiership after some dismal results had shocked his side into performances that propelled them to a somewhat safer 13th.

This morning, as he considers Everton's position (fourth from bottom) and opponents (an improving Tottenham), he must be less than enthusiastic that the sustain-a-thrashing tactic will work again.

"I saw the white flag from some of my players last week and I was bitterly disappointed," he said yesterday, referring

to last weekend's 4-1 defeat at home to Aston Villa.

"Afterwards I tried to defend the lads in public, but their heads dropped. I can't afford to have that."

"It's now up to me to select a side who can get us a result and if that means disappointing a few players, it must be done."

Kendall would dearly like to be able to select his side's motivational captain and leading goalscorer, Duncan Ferguson, but must wait for tests on a knee injury. "That will be a very, very late decision," Kendall said.

"Obviously I want him to play and he wants to play, but it's something that has to be considered carefully because of

Either Tottenham's or Everton's Premiership status may depend on their meeting today. Nick Harris looks at that contest and analyses the weekend's other matches

the long-term effects of another breakdown.

"If Duncan is fit, it will give everyone a massive boost, but it will be a decision only made after a chat between myself, the medical people and Duncan."

Tenagers Richard Dunne and Gavin McCann could both come into the reckoning, but Kendall will be wary of using too many youngsters in such an important game.

Today's fixture is no less important for the home side, but after last week's morale-boosting win at Crystal Palace, Tottenham are likely to at least start the game with the greater

confidence. Christian Gross not only had 23 senior players in training this week - more than in any week since he arrived at the club in November - he will also definitely recall the flamboyant David Ginola after suspension.

"It has been a new experience for me," said Gross of his selection options, which also include Darren Anderton, Les Ferdinand and Steven Livers. The latter is not fully fit, but Anderton and Ferdinand may yet make it as far as the bench this afternoon.

"It is important that our destiny is in our own hands,"

Gross said. "We prefer to dictate things ourselves rather than hope other teams get a result for you."

One team who will be feeling rather fortunate that fate had a hand in their futures this week are Leeds, who escaped unscathed from a plane crash.

Following the emergency crash landing at Stansted Airport on Tuesday morning, George Graham is hoping his team's football will not be unduly affected.

"We now have to try and put that behind us and get on with our season. A European spot is still up for grabs, so we have

to be positive and go for it," he said yesterday.

Monday night's 3-0 defeat at West Ham came as a surprise after 4-0 and 5-0 victories over Blackburn and Derby respectively, but Graham hopes that a result in the Yorkshire derby against relegation-threatened Barnsley today will maintain the challenge for a Uefa Cup place.

Barnsley, who saw three men sent off in last week's 3-2 defeat against Liverpool and who then lost in midweek to a late Blackburn winner, must feel that they are due some good fortune soon. If

Leeds have problems recovering from their Stansted ordeal, today might be the day that Barnsley finally manage to pull clear of the bottom three, however briefly.

With Crystal Palace not playing again until next weekend, the only other team that can make progress from the relegation zone are Bolton, who travel to Wimbledon.

Despite losing 1-0 in midweek to Arsenal, the Wanderers still believe they can avoid the drop. The South African defender Mark Fish was especially pleased with the midweek game in light of what he sees as the Gunners' Premiership credentials.

"I thought Arsenal were very good and had the look of

champions, but I also believe we are capable ourselves and that we can stay in the Premiership," he said.

That notion that will be given more credibility if they can come away with a result today against opponents who have struggled themselves recently, and whose 0-0 draw with Newcastle in midweek did little but illustrate that they are not clear of danger yet.

Elsewhere the Premiership has a distinctly mid-table flavour, with Southampton travelling to Sheffield Wednesday, and Leicester playing hosts to Coventry. West Ham's game at Aston Villa and Chelsea's 31 Derby tomorrow are notable mainly for the visitors' chase for Uefa Cup places.

Aston Villa v West Ham

Aston Villa will be encouraged by the availability of striker Savo Milosevic for today's game. The Yugoslavian international, enjoying a renaissance at Villa Park under the new manager John Gregory, returns to the squad after missing last weekend's 4-1 win at Everton through suspension and could be part of a three-man attack along with Dwight Yorke and Julian Joachim. Gregory has secured four Premiership wins in five games since he took over from Brian Little and is likely to continue with an unchanged side for today, apart from perhaps including Milosevic.

Andy Iriape has recovered from a groin strain to return to West Ham's squad. The Hammers also welcome back Steve Lomas and Frank Lampard, who both missed the 3-0 win over Leeds on Monday through suspension. Striker Paul Krison is still troubled by his groin injury and will not play, while goalkeeper Lukasz Mikolajski is out with a calf injury. Harry Redknapp must decide whether to keep the same attacking formation as on Monday, or bring in Lomas, Lampard or both. John Moncur is the most likely to be replaced as West Ham look stretch their Premiership unbeaten run to eight games. Striker John Harrison will be looking to complete a seasonal hat-trick of braces against Villa, having scored against them twice in the Upton Park fixture in November and twice as the Hammers won 3-0 in the Coca-Cola Cup in October.

Leeds v Barnsley

Leeds' Australian international striker Harry Kewell is likely to return to the side for today's Yorkshire derby, after being forced to miss the 3-0 defeat at West Ham on Monday. A Fifa-enforced five-day ruling (following complaints from the Australian FA after Kewell withdrew from a three-game friendly series with Brazil through injury) led to him watching the Upton Park match from the stands. Centre-back Lucas Radebe is also a two-match ban, while captain David Whelan is suspended for a groin injury. Leeds have won three of their last five games and a win today would move them to the top of the Championship and take them to fourth in the Premiership.

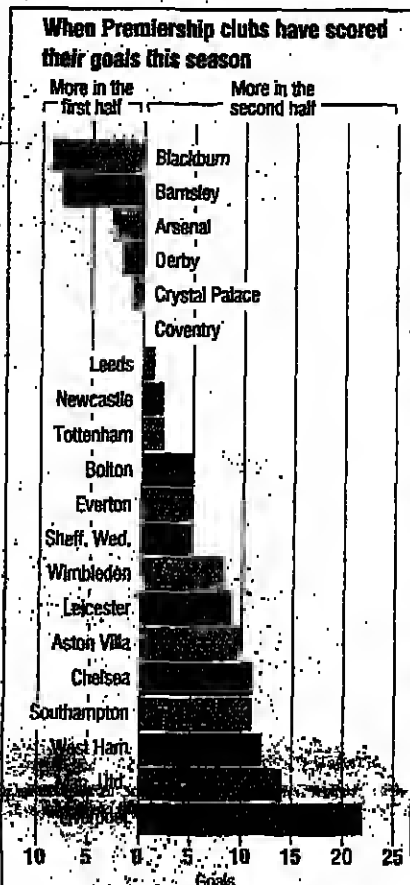
Barnsley manager Danny Wilson, knowing a win might take his side out of the relegation zone, should have a full complement of strikers to choose from today. Ian Page, Jonathan Ford and John Hendrie are available following five weeks out with ankle ligament damage. Clint Marcelle, who suffered double vision and needed an overnight stay in hospital following a bang on the head during the game at Ewood Park, is likely to be on the bench. Centre-back Arjan de Zeeuw may come into contention after just 60 minutes of first-team play in the last seven weeks due to a nagging groin injury. Fellow defenders Peter Markstedt (neck) and Alex Krizan (knee) are still missing.

Leicester v Coventry

Leicester midfielders Neil Lennon and Muzzy Izzet face late fitness tests on ankle injuries before the Midlands derby against Coventry at Filbert Street. Northern Ireland international Lennon is the most doubtful starter, having been hurt in the 2-0 defeat at Bolton last weekend, but Izzet is expected to return after serving a two-match suspension. The Foxes are still without Steve Walsh and Ian Marshall but striker Tony Cottee (calf) comes into contention for a place today after proving his fitness in a reserves game. Leicester's recent form (including three consecutive defeats in their last three matches) has seen them fall well out of contention for a European place next season, but they remain the only Premiership side to have beaten Coventry at Highfield Road this season. Coventry go into today's game, with the best recent form in the Premiership - seven League wins in their last eight games and an unbeaten spell of 12 matches in all. Manager Gordon Strachan is likely to drop leading scorer Dion Dublin into his emergency defensive role again to counter Leicester's aerial threat this afternoon. If so, it could mean a first-team recall for Romanian international striker Viorel Moldovan, with either Richard Shaw or Gary Breen making way for Dublin at the back. England Under-21 international Marcus Hall, who is still suffering with a calf strain, is Strachan's only major injury doubt for today's game.

...And statistics

How Liverpool maintain an Anfield goalscoring tradition



Although today's Liverpool team have yet to live up to the achievements of their predecessors of the 1970s and 1980s, Roy Evans and his men have managed to preserve at least one of the great Anfield traditions.

It always used to be said that Liverpool never knew when they were beaten. Their capacity for scoring late and decisive goals was legendary. This season, on home soil in particular, Liverpool have made a habit of coming good in the second half. Of their 54 Premiership goals in the current campaign, 38 have been scored after the interval.

Fifty-six per cent of all Premiership goals this season have been scored in the second half. Twenty-one per cent have been scored in the last 15 minutes.

In particular, most successful teams tend to score more goals later in the game. Manchester United (14 more than in the first half) and West Ham (12) are the next two most successful second-half teams behind Liverpool. Indeed, of the Premiership's top seven teams only Blackburn and Arsenal have scored more goals in the first half than in the second.

Breaking the goals down even further, Manchester United have scored more times (17) in the last 15 minutes of matches than any other Premiership side.

Fifty-eight per cent of Premiership goals this season have been scored by home teams, though four sides - Leeds, Chelsea, Leicester and Crystal Palace - have been more productive away from home.

This season's average of 2.65 goals per game is exactly the same as the previous Premiership best of five years ago. Until the late 1960s the old First Division regularly averaged more than three goals or more per game. The highest rate of scoring was 3.73 in 1957-58 and 1960-61.

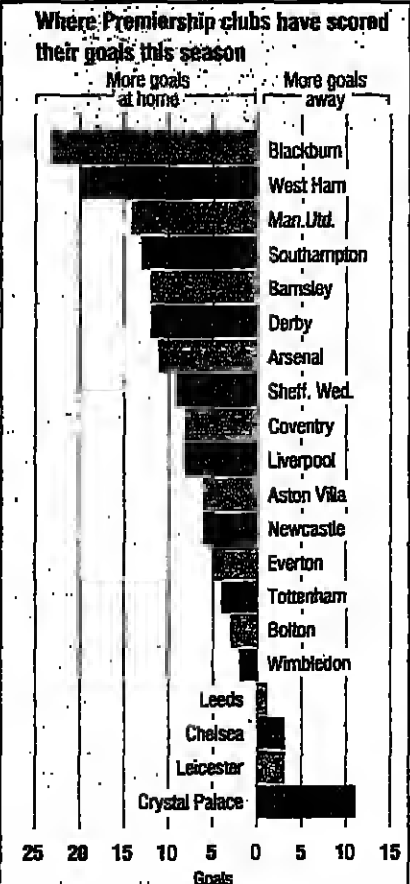


Liverpool celebrate Steve McManis's winner at Arsenal. Last most of their goals this season, it was scored in the second half.

Other oddities: On average Tottenham have scored their home goals earlier than any other team. Away from home they score their goals later than any other side. The earliest of Tottenham's away goals was after 37 minutes at Blackburn.

Leeds have scored 22 goals at Ewood Road but have yet to score in the first 30 minutes of a home game. Only Chelsea have scored more away goals than Manchester United, but the earliest goal scored away by Alex Ferguson's team was in the 29th minute at Goodison Park in August.

Statistics: Brian Sears



Goals scored this season beyond the 75th minute	Average time of home goals (minutes)	Average time of away goals (minutes)
Manchester United 17	Tottenham 35.3	Derby 37.0
Chelsea 16	Barnsley 40.1	Leeds 40.3
Liverpool 15	Blackburn 40.5	Barnsley 41.2
Leicester 12	Crystal Palace 43.5	Crystal Palace 42.5
Leeds 11	Arsenal 43.8	Coventry 42.9
Sheffield Wednesday 11	Derby 46.1	Everton 42.9
Coventry 10	Sheffield Wednesday 46.6	Blackburn 46.6
Blackburn 9	West Ham 46.8	Southampton 46.6
Everton 9	Wimbledon 47.8	Bolton 49.3
Aston Villa 8	Manchester United 49.9	Liverpool 49.8
Arsenal 7	Southampton 50.4	Newcastle 49.9
Bolton 7	Newcastle 51.0	West Ham 50.3
Derby 7	Aston Villa 52.8	Arsenal 51.6
Newcastle 7	Chelsea 53.2	Wimbledon 51.0
Southampton 7	Coventry 54.1	Leicester 52.9
Tottenham 7	Bolton 57.9	Aston Villa 54.4
West Ham 6	Everton 58.4	Chelsea 55.0
Crystal Palace 4	Leeds 60.0	Sheffield Wednesday 55.3
Wimbledon 4	Leicester 60.1	Manchester United 61.6
Barnsley 3	Liverpool 60.6	Tottenham 66.6

Sheff Wed v Southampton

Di Canio 13
Leading scorer
Last season: 1-1

Sheffield Wednesday's Gocce Sedoski is likely to make his home debut. The Macedonian will partner Des Walker at the heart of defence, allowing Andy Hinchcliffe to switch from the three-man back line to his usual spot at left-back. Italian striker Francesco Sannelli will be a surprise inclusion in the squad if his international clearance arrives in time. The 19-year-old impressed Ron Atkinson in training, but Atkinson is likely to rely on his two other strikers, Benito Carbone and Paolo Di Canio, to help Andy Booth in attack. Peter Rudi (hamstring) is out for a fourth game in a row.

England Under-21 striker Kevin Davies returns to Southampton's squad for the first time in two months. He is expected to be named on the substitutes' bench with Norwegian striker Egil Ostensund and David Hirst continuing in attack. Kevin Richardson returns. Carlton Palmer serves a one-match ban. Ken Monkou is recalled after missing last weekend's 2-1 win against Newcastle through suspension. Midfielder Matthew Oakley is doubtful with a twisted knee while David Hughes is battling to recover from a dead leg.

Tottenham v Everton

Ginola 9
Leading scorer
Last season: 0-0

David Ginola returns to the Tottenham team for today's match against Everton. Spurs' second consecutive relegation six-pointer following their 3-1 win at Crystal Palace last week. The influential Frenchman missed last week's game through suspension. England hopefuls Darren Anderton and Les Ferdinand are both in contention for a place on the bench after recovering from injury. Christian Gross's side are now three points clear of the bottom three, having played the same number of games.

Howard Kendall will make a late decision on the fitness of captain Duncan Ferguson. The Scottish striker could return if he recovers from a knee ligament injury. Kendall could bring in on-loan winger Peter Beagrie, after the 32-year-old began his second Goodison Park career as a late substitute in last week's 4-1 home defeat to Aston Villa. Slaven Bilic and Carl Tiler are both still suspended, but Kendall could play teenager Richard Dunne alongside veterans Dave Watson and Craig Short. Another teenager, midfielder Gavin McCann, may make a full debut after five substitute appearances.

Wimbledon v Bolton

Bent 8
Leading scorer
Last season: No fixture

Wimbledon will be without their ex-England under-21 defender Ben Thatcher again for this relegation game against Bolton. The former Millwall player may be out for a fortnight with a ruptured thigh muscle. The Dons welcomed back defender Dean Blackwell in their midweek 0-0 draw against Newcastle following his recent injury and he is expected to continue again today. Wimbledon have won just one Premiership game in their last five, but they have a five-point cushion to the relegation zone and have a game in hand on all the sides below them.

Bolton manager Colin Todd has to decide whether to pick £3.5m striker Dean Holdsworth, who has not scored since October, or on-loan striker Bob Taylor for today's match. Taylor was preferred to Holdsworth in Bolton's 2-0 win against Leicester last week, when the former replaced the latter, who was taken off after just 30 minutes of the game. Todd is also missing defenders Gerry Taggart, who has a groin strain, Mike Whitlow and Robbie Elliott, who will both be out for the rest of the season.

Derby v Chelsea

Wanchope 15
Leading scorer
Last season: 3-2

Robbie van der Laan (ankle) could make his first Derby appearance since October. The Dutch midfielder could replace Darrell Powell, the latest recruit to Jamaica's World Cup campaign, who damaged an ankle at Coventry last Saturday and could be out for a month. Igor Simac is suspended, so Gary Rowett is likely to replace him. Jim Smith also has to decide whether to recall goalkeeper Hart Poom and the Italian Stefano Erano. Poom missed the defeat at Coventry with a shoulder injury and Erano was out with a hamstring tear, but both have been training this week. Striker Dean Sturridge is likely to be recalled after completing a two-match ban and Lars Schonen makes his Pride Park debut after his move from Blackburn. Dmitri Khanev's likely return in goal for Chelsea will be one of a series of changes Gianluca Viali will make to his Chelsea side following their 1-0 defeat in the Cup-Winners' Cup on Thursday. Tore Andre Flo and Mark Hughes seem certain to replace Viali and Gianfranco Zola up front, while Frank Sinclair, Jody Morris, Danny Granville, Laurent Charvet and David Lee could all feature.

LEADING SCORERS

Player	Goals
Harrison	13
West Ham	12
Cole	12
Man. Utd.	10
Bolton	10
Blackburn	10
Dublin	10
Coventry	10
Owen	10
Liverpool	10
Barnsley	10
Leicester	10
Galacher	10
Blackburn	10
Vialli	10
Chelsoe	10
Fiorotti	10
Barnsley	10
Harrison	10
Leeds	10
Wanchope	10
Derby	10
Johnson	10
Di Canio	10
Sheff Wed	10
Wanchope	10
Po	10
Chelsoe	10

FA CARLING PREMIERSHIP: HOW THEY STAND

Pos	Team	P	Pts	GD	W	D	L	F	A	W	D	L	F	A	Form	Remaining matches
1	Arsenal	30	60	+23	11	2	2	30	9	6	7	2	19	17	DWWDW	Monday Blackburn (A), 16 Apr; Liverpool (H), 18 Apr; Newcastle (H), 27 Apr; Crystal Palace (A), 4 May; Leeds (H), 10 May; Barnsley (A), 12 May
2	Blackburn	30	51	+12	10	3	2	37	19	4	6	5	40	20	LWLLW	Monday Man Utd (H), 8 Apr; Bolton (A), 11 Apr; Tottenham (H), 19 Apr; Sheff Wed (H), 25 Apr; Wimbledon (H), 29 Apr; Chelsea (A), 2 May; Coventry (A), 10 May; Derby (A), 12 May
3	Leeds	31	48	+12	7	3	5	22	15	7	3	6	23	18	LWYWWL	Today Aston Villa (H), 8 Apr; Chelsea (H), 11 Apr; Everton (A), 18 Apr; Bolton (A), 25 Apr; Coventry (H), 4 May; Man Utd (A), 10 May; Wimbledon (H), 29 Apr; Chelsea (A), 2 May; Coventry (A), 10 May; Derby (A), 12 May
4	Derby	30	45	+4	10	3	2	28	13	3	3	9	16	27	WLWLL	Today Arsenal (H), 11 Apr; Sheff Wed (A), 18 Apr; Bolton (A), 25 Apr; Coventry (H), 4 May; Man Utd (A), 10 May; Wimbledon (H), 29 Apr; Chelsea (A), 2 May; Coventry (A), 10 May; Derby (A), 12 May
5	Southampton	31	43	-2	10	1	5	27	18	3	3	9	14	25	WWWLW	Today Sheff Wed (A), 11 Apr; Bolton (A), 18 Apr; Tottenham (H), 19 Apr; Sheff Wed (H), 25 Apr; Wimbledon (H), 29 Apr; Chelsea (A), 2 May; Coventry (A), 10 May; Derby (A), 12 May
6	Leicester	30	40	+3	5	7	3	16	11	5	3	7	19	21	DWLLW	Today Tottenham (H), 11 Apr; Bolton (A), 18 Apr; Tottenham (H), 19 Apr; Sheff Wed (H), 25 Apr; Wimbledon (H), 29 Apr; Chelsea (A), 2 May; Coventry (A), 10 May; Derby (A), 12 May
7	Wimbledon	30	36	-4	5	4	7	16	18	4	5	5	14	15	LLWLD	Today Bolton (A), 11 Apr; Bolton (A), 18 Apr; Tottenham (H), 19 Apr; Sheff Wed (H), 25 Apr; Wimbledon (H), 29 Apr; Chelsea (A), 2 May; Coventry (A), 10 May; Derby (A), 12 May
8	Tottenham	31	34	-16	6	5	4	18	19	3	2	11	14	29	LWLWD	Today Bolton (A), 11 Apr; Bolton (A), 18 Apr; Tottenham (H), 19 Apr; Sheff Wed (H), 25 Apr; Wimbledon (H), 29 Apr; Chelsea (A), 2 May; Coventry (A), 10 May; Derby (A), 12 May
9	Barnsley	31	31	-39	6	3	6	22	29	3	1	12	10	42	DLLWW	Today Bolton (A), 11 Apr; Bolton (A), 18 Apr; Tottenham (H), 19 Apr; Sheff Wed (H), 25 Apr; Wimbledon (H), 29 Apr; Chelsea (A), 2 May; Coventry (A), 10 May; Derby (A), 12 May
10	Crystal Palace	31	26	-27	0	4	10	8	29	6	5	6	19	25	LLLWL	Today Bolton (A), 11 Apr; Bolton (A), 18 Apr; Tottenham (H), 19 Apr; Sheff Wed (H), 25 Apr; Wimbledon (H), 29 Apr; Chelsea (A), 2 May; Coventry (A), 10 May; Derby (A), 12 May

FAIR PLAY LEAGUE

Player	Goals
G Willard	17
G Pol	17
M Reed	16
G Barber	17
J Winter	15
D Elleray	17
U Rennie	17
P Durkin	16
S Dunn	13
A Wilde	16
M Riley	16
P Jones	17
K Borge	16
N Barry	16
P Alcock	16
S Lodge	16
W Gallagher	16
S Lodge	16
P Bodemann	16

UNFAIR PLAY LEAGUE

Player	Goals
Everton	1
Coventry	3
Bolton	3
Chelsea	3
Leeds	3
Arsenal	3
P Palace	3
Derby	3
Blackburn	3
Sheff Wed	3
Solton	3
Barnsley	3
West Ham	3
Newcastle	3
Man Utd	3
Lester	3
Liverpool	3
Wimbledon	3
Villa	3



SPORT

Saturday 4 April 1998

One Man's death overshadows National

Racing

By Richard Edmondson

THE Grand National will not be the same today. The world's greatest steeplechase will be run at Liverpool under a pall following the death of Britain's most notable jumping horse.

One Man died at Aintree yesterday. The successor to Desert Orchid as a great grey which bestrode the National Hunt scene broke a leg and had to be destroyed. His death cast a cloud over the whole meeting.

The Mumm Melling Chase had been characterised by One Man's trademark extravagant vaulting until the field reached the ninth fence. The grey put in a short stride and crashed sideways through the final obstacle of his career. Ominously, the screens were immediately erected around the stricken body.

"It was an extremely serious fracture, an unmendable fracture and for that reason he was put down on humane grounds," Paul Webbon, chief veterinary adviser to the Jockey Club, said. "There are two possibilities. The force of take-off could have caused it, but it's more likely it was the way he landed over the fence."

Brian Harding, One Man's jockey, returned to the weighing room in tears, and his owner, John Hales, whose company produces the Teletubbies toys, had to be helped sobbing into a first aid room. "I can't say anything," he said. "I'm too devastated." The body of One Man will be taken back to Hales's Telford home for burial.

Gordon Richards, One Man's 67-year-old trainer, has been ill and was making his first visit to a racecourse yesterday for a month. His son Nicky said: "This is the worst day ever. Dad is very upset. He is going to see



Black Friday: One Man's jockey, Brian Harding (left), returns to the weighing room after the death of his horse in the Mumm Melling Chase at Aintree yesterday; shortly afterwards Ollie McPhail lies prone on the ground (right) after being thrown from Blue Cheek in the Foxhunters' Steeplechase at The Chair. McPhail was rushed to hospital but regained consciousness. Photographs: John Giles/PA (left) and Julian Herbert/Allsport (right)

Mr Hales and after he's spoken to him he is going to go home." David Nicholson, another leading trainer, said: "He was a lovely horse, the trainer's favourite. He rode him out and adored him. It's terribly sad for all concerned and it's spoilt my Liverpool."

One Man was the highest money-earner in National Hunt training. The one big prize that had eluded him was a Cheltenham win, but only two weeks

ago he won the Queen Mother Champion Chase at the National Hunt Festival.

Richard Dunwoody, the former champion jockey, was One Man's regular pilot until this year. "He was one of the best two and a half mile chasers I ever rode," Dunwoody said. "He had a lovely way about him and he was a brilliant rider. When I was holding him up at Cheltenham in the Gold Cup I wasn't able to use his jump-

ing. But on the last occasion at Cheltenham he showed just how brilliant he could be."

Tony McCoy, the champion jockey, said: "Everyone in racing is gutted. He was a special horse, a bit like Desert Orchid." One Man's race was not run over the National's fierce fences. However, the race which was the Foxhunters' Chase, saw one horse, Fantastic Fleet, killed and others suffer appalling falls. Six horses fell, eight unseated their

riders, one was brought down and one refused. One jockey, Ollie McPhail, suffered head injuries but regained consciousness on his way to hospital.

Yesterday's events will reignite the debate over whether the sport's death toll is unacceptably high. Animal rights protesters are a regular feature of the National and those who attend today will have further fuel for their arguments.

A miserable day at Aintree

was compounded when the County Stand had to be cleared after the third race, raising the spectre of 12 months ago when the Saturday National had to be abandoned following bomb warnings from the IRA. On this occasion, though, the evacuation was caused by a technical fault in a fire alarm.

Earlier in the day there had been a controlled explosion in the weighing room following the discovery of a briefcase. A po-

lice patrol at 4am found the bag, which transpired to have been left behind by a jockey's valet.

The engine compartments and boots of all vehicles will be searched on arrival today and spectators will be asked to go through one of 55 airport-style archways and X-ray machines placed around the course.

Up to 60,000 people are expected and they could bring chaos. At the peak point yesterday it was taking an hour and a

half to clear the security queue.

The favourite for today's race is likely to be Rough Quest, who is trying to become the first horse since Red Rum to win the race twice. Last year's runner-up, Sunny Bay, is attempting to become the first grey since 1961 to win the race. The grey in most racing people's minds today, however, will be the one that perished on Aintree's fields.

One Man tribute, page 18
National guide, pages 16-17

Nothing but best will do for England

Rugby Union

By Chris Hewett

CLIVE WOODWARD has repeatedly requested that his England side be judged only by the highest available standards, so anything less convincing than a 50-point hunking of Ireland at Twickenham this afternoon should leave the coach and his charges open to a verbal assault of Alf Garnett proportions. Perhaps that realisation led Woodward to trumpet the visitors' chances of turning Five Nations expectation on its head: certainly, he was more upbeat about the Irish yesterday than the Irish had been about themselves.

Spectacularly so, in fact. Twenty-four hours earlier,

Warren Gatland, the new Irish coach, had appeared on the verge of catching the first flight back to Dublin. "We lost 46-6 last season and that was at home, so the same could happen this time," he said, descending into a world-weary tone hardly designed to inspire his team into delivering one of their occasional hellfire spectaculars. "We'll do our very best to get close to England, but they're a quality side."

Not much point turning up, then, England have rattled along at an average 37 points a match during the current championship and they need another 32 to surpass the record 141-point aggregate they achieved, partly at Ireland's embarrassed expense, last year. Just the 32? The way Gatland has been telling it this

week, they will sail past that marker before you can say "Conor McGuinness".

But Gatland is a New Zealander - an All Black tourist, indeed - and rugby men of that stamp do not lose games in advance. John Mitchell, England's assistant coach, knows Gatland better than most, for in his previous incarnation as a mean-eyed North Island forward, he played something like 100 provincial games alongside him in a feared and formidable Waikato pack. If Woodward was in danger of falling for the kiwi-tinged blarney, Mitchell has successfully disabused him.

"Unless we are absolutely at our best we will lose this game," Woodward pronounced with missionary zeal. "I look at that

Irish pack man for man and we would be happy to have many of them in our squad. Therefore, the initial aim is to win this one by whatever means come to hand and I really don't mind the direct route if it brings success. We have to be aware that if they get going up front, we could be in for a nasty surprise."

Woodward knows full well, however, that the Irish forwards can get going all they like and still find themselves impaled on the pointed end of a sharp stick. For all the industrious qualities purveyed by Paul Wallace, Paddy Johns, David Corkery and the inspirational Keith Wood, who must be one of the few Harlequin captains never to have played at Twickenham, it is desperately difficult to win international matches

without a back division of at least average ability.

More than one Irish forward has pointed out that the visitors might easily have reached London with three tournament wins nestled in their kitbags rather than three defeats weighing heavily on their minds.

And there is merit in the argument, to be sure; a one-point loss to Scotland was followed by the most glorious of two-point defeats in Paris and had Ireland made anything like the most of their first-half possession against Wales, there could have been only one winner.

Sadly, the Irish backs seem incapable of making the most of anything. Nowhere near quick enough in midfield, their decision tends to be final on the rare occasions they create half a yard of room for themselves and, as a result, they crave contact rather than space. If all 15 Englishmen were to be sent off this afternoon, the visitors would spend the rest of the game running into the referee.

In the light of a back-line supremacy of vast proportions, Woodward may well be justified in giving Mike Catt a first ever

start on the right wing. Eric Elwood, the Irish outside-half, will not hesitate to pepper Bath's resident South African with all manner of high, hanging Garryowens, but as Wood, the Irish captain, said this week: "I toured South Africa with Mike last summer and he's perfectly comfortable in any position. If England can turn Austin Healey into a quality wing, as they clearly have, I've no doubt they can do the same with Mike."

Assuming Jeremy Guscott has committed himself to next year's World Cup, Catt has next to no chance of breaking into the side as an outside centre. The No 10 berth is also becoming log-jammed, what with Paul Grayson's form, Jon Wilkinson's startling emergence as an international outside-half in waiting and Alex King's return to fitness. Suddenly, in the space of a week, it looks like wing or nowhere for England's Mr Versatile.

If only Ireland had access to such a luxury as Catt, who would sleepwalk into their side at outside-half, centre, wing or full-back. Brian Ashton, a connoisseur of back play if ever

there was one, turned tail and fled Dublin for Somerset after the first of this season's Five Nations tournaments and given his passion for ambitious, wide-ranging, perpetual-motion rugby, it remains a surprise that he lasted as long as he did.

Five Nations' Championship, page 22

THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD
No. 3576, Saturday 4 April
By Spurius

ACROSS

- Do the same as Norman and Co? (7)
- Rough stuff you get from bestial males? (7)
- Need re-write of scene - it's wanted by end of July (9)
- Old bellringer giving dirty look when Pastor enters (5)
- Vegetable - beet, by the sound of it (5)
- Type of school getting ready to receive pupils? (3-6)
- Given chance to go to London, means to get up in business? (7,7)
- They'll clean up and make a handsome pile (6-8)
- No pain, no gain for its manufacturers (9)
- One having to lie about second attempt at exam (5)
- Here in parts of Belgium march is more formal (5)
- Vessel that's often locked up? (5-4)
- Songs taken from book (7)
- Ruler making mark in English media (7)

DOWN

- In church having forty winks and something to nibble? (6)
- Part of aircraft produced in a small room in New England (7)
- Take out a continental novel and two articles in English (6)
- Place you'd expect to find the umbrella pine? (4-7)
- Starts to bowl one yorker that's terrific! (3)
- Girl in trouble, turning up after church (5)
- Price one found in torn book, second issue (7)
- Flower girl almost made off clutching ring (8)
- Old County Councilor initially eager to accommodate new screen projection (11)
- Item found on desk, monograph excerpt (5-4)
- Cause for celebration (8)
- Practical approach one's encountered in the field (7)
- Give back balance left on deposit (7)
- Way a trade union's achieving position of influence? (6)
- Eat too much Cheddar? (5)
- Salad ingredient - bit of celeriac, ostensibly (3)

The first five correct solutions to this week's puzzle opened next Thursday day's early edition of the Independent. Answers and winners' names will be published next Saturday. Send solutions to: The Independent Crossword, P.O. Box 1018, The Independent, 1 Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 3PL. Please use the box number and postcode and give your own postcode. Last week's winners: S. Nicholas, Witham; P. Toze, Harwood Heath; R. Franklin, Wotton; M. Jones, Farnham; A. Jones, New Brighton.

ENGLAND v IRELAND
at Twickenham

M. Perry	Bath	15 C. Clarke	Tenure
M. Catt	Bath	14 R. Wallace	Saracens
W. Greenwood	Leicester	13 K. Maggs	Bristol
J. Guscott	Bath	12 M. McCall	London Irish
A. Healey	Leicester	11 D. Hickie	St Mary's
P. Grayson	Northampton	10 E. Wood	Galwegians
M. Dawson	Northampton	9 C. McGuinness	St Mary's
J. Leonard	Harlequins	1 R. Corrigan	Greystones
R. Cockerill	Leicester	2 K. Wood	Harlequins, capt
D. Garforth	Leicester	3 P. Wallace	Saracens
M. Johnson	Leicester	4 P. Johns	Saracens
G. Archer	Newcastle	5 M. O'Kelly	London Irish
L. Dallaglio	Wolves, capt	6 D. Corkery	Bristol
N. Back	Leicester	7 A. Ward	Ballynahinch
T. Diprose	Saracens	8 V. Costello	St Mary's

Replacements: 16 P. de Gierville (Bath); 17 J. Wilkinson (Newcastle); 18 S. Banton (Gloucester); 19 D. Ryan (Newcastle); 20 D. Greenwood (Saracens); 21 G. Rowntree (Leicester); 22 D. West (Leicester).

Referee: D. Bevan (Wales)

Kick-off: 2.0 (Sky Sports 2)

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England v Romania
England v Colombia

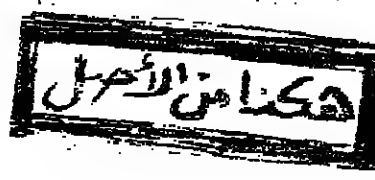
Scotland v Brazil
Holland v Belgium
Italy v Austria
France v Saudi Arabia

Last 16
Quarter Final
Semi Final
World Cup Final

England v Tunisia - 2434
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YOUR MONEY

Personal finance, motoring and property

Saturday 4 April 1998

Living beyond your genes

Paul Slade explains how reports of the death of actuaries' tables have been somewhat exaggerated

A new science fiction film, *Gattaca*, shows a society where genetic testing can determine people's lifespan at birth. In real life, insurers don't find things quite that simple.

Although DNA testing may play a part in life insurance underwriting soon, insurers have so far relied on tables of past mortality statistics to control the risk they accept.

Making DNA testing a part of underwriting would create a whole web of moral problems. High-risk groups already pay a higher premium for their life and health cover under the existing system. Some fear genetic testing would take this a huge step forward, allowing insurers to refuse applications from anyone

whose DNA suggests they are at high risk of serious disease. In any event, there are limits to what DNA sampling alone could tell insurers - no matter how sophisticated the technology may become.

Paul Greenwood, research actuary at William M Mercer, says: "You'd still have some statistical averages coming into it. What you don't know, looking two or three years ahead, is how harsh the winter is going to be, which still seems to have an effect [on mortality]. You also don't know whether the long-term improvement in mortality is going to speed up or slow down."

Nigel Masters, a partner at Coopers & Lybrand, sounds a similar note of caution. He says: "Within the actuarial profession, there's considerable debate over whether DNA testing is going to be of any great use at all."

The closest actuaries can come to forecasting a particular individual's age at death is to calculate the age at which his or her chance of still being alive is 50/50. For a man aged 30, this would be the age at which statistics suggest only half of today's 30-year-old men will still be alive.

The first table shows where this age falls for various age groups. For actuaries, the single biggest determinant of when you are going to die is when your parents died. But this



Only in science fiction can DNA tests determine lifespans at birth.

Illustration: Mehau Kulyk/Science Photo Library

Smoking Kills	Average age at death	Standard annuity (per year)
Male		
Smoker	77/78	£5,269
Non-smoker	81	£4,649
Increase		13%
Female		
Smoker	81/82	£4,581
Non-smoker	85	£4,135
Increase		11%

Effect of smoking on life expectancy and annuity payable at age 65. Assumes lump sum of £50,000 pension. Smokers defined as smoked 10 cigarettes or more for at least 10 years. Source: Stalwart Assurance

only indicates that you will share some of the same risk factors as your parents. The actual outcome in your own case may be very different.

Mr Masters says: "Your family may have weak hearts but, if you keep fit and don't eat any fatty foods, that may never be a problem for you. If your father died of lung cancer, but

you don't smoke, you're probably OK."

All actuaries like him can do is look at large groups of roughly comparable people and say what the average age of death for that group might be. Any real death in the group may fall 30 years or more after the average. But the fact that people your age can, on aver-

age, hope for another 40 years will not help you if you fall under a bus tomorrow.

The good news is that, the longer you live, the longer you can expect to go on living. For example, figures from the Government Actuary show that a man of 40 can expect to live for another 35.96 years. Assuming he survives to 45, he

can then look forward to another 31.31 years.

In other words, he has lived for a full five years, but reduced his future life expectancy by only 4.65 years - a "profit" of 128 days. This effect continues throughout life. Even the average 105-year-old, simply by virtue of having made it that far, can expect to enjoy two more birthdays.

A better deal for smokers? Only if you are ready to die sooner

Stalwart Assurance's special annuity rates for smokers show the effect of smoking on life expectancy. Paradoxically, though, this is one case where smokers actually get a better deal.

When you buy an annuity, the insurer agrees to trade the lump sum from your pension for a flow of income which will last the rest of your life. The longer you are expected to live, the thinner the available cash must be spread, and the lower the annual income will be.

Stalwart has realised that this means it can give smokers higher annual payouts than non-smokers. A smoker of 65 can expect to die three or four years sooner than a non-smoker the same age. A lump sum of £50,000 would buy a Stalwart annuity of £5,269 for a male smoker aged 65, against just £4,649 for the equivalent non-smoker.

The company offers similar enhanced rates to people who are grossly overweight,

or suffer from conditions such as high blood pressure. In these cases, the applicant's overall health is assessed on a points system.

Cathy Horsley, Stalwart's marketing manager, says: "To qualify just for being overweight, you'd have to be something like 25 per cent above the average for your height. But what might happen is that you're quite overweight, and have high blood pressure, and the two together would qualify you."

Expected age of death

Men	Age of death	Women	Age of death
Age now	Smokers	Age now	Smokers
20	71	20	74
30	71	30	74
40	72	40	74
50	73	50	75
60	75	60	77
70	79	70	80
80	85	80	85

Source: Coopers & Lybrand



Canadian windfall

Canada Life, the mutual life assurance company with more than 500,000 policyholders, of which 100,000 are in the UK, announced this week that it is to demutualise, with payouts to members worth an average £2,200 each. No date has been fixed for the conversion, which is not expected until next year. The shares will be quoted on Toronto's Stock Exchange.

The flotation raises the stakes among UK mutual insurers which have steadfastly refused to contemplate a stock market listing. Among those thought suitable for flotations or ripe for takeover are Friends Provident, Scottish Widows, Scottish Widows, Liverpool Victoria and National Provident Institution.

Wage worries

Britain's workers risk losing about £5.5bn in wages every week, according to a study carried out on behalf of Norwich Union Healthcare. The survey shows that two-thirds of employees don't protect their incomes in the event of long-term sickness, trusting their employers to look after them. Yet only 6 per cent of employees surveyed offer such income protection. NU Healthcare has a free information sheet. Call 0800 400123.

Over here

Vanguard, a US fund management company, announced this week that it is to offer its services in Europe. Its move is likely to lead - in the long-term - to cheaper fund management costs over here. Jonathan Davis Column: Page 5.

Revving up

A new breed of super-scooters is hitting the UK. Gilera, an Italian subsidiary of Piaggio, makers of Vespa, has introduced an eye-catching 180cc machine, the Runner FX-R, offering ultra-powerful performance. A marginally more sedate version, the Hexagon, is also available. Page 9.

Scoring the best insurance deals

Insurers have been signing up top clubs to launch a range of financial products to the fans. Stephen McDowell reports

Mark & Spencers, Virgin, Asda and Sainsbury's might all be aiming to be among the new breed of financial services providers. Yet their efforts could soon be kicked into touch by a new breed of upstarts - football clubs.

Clubs such as Derby County, West Ham and Nationwide first division leaders Nottingham Forest are among the first out of the financial services tunnel. The advantage to fans is that they can support their club by buying something as mundane as motor insurance. The advantage to the club is that it costs them nothing - and they get a chunk of free marketing to boot.

At present, they only offer branded household and motor insurance. But this is seen as something of an experiment and, if it works, you could well see these and other big-name clubs offering a wider choice of financial products. In the longer term, some of them are hoping to expand by selling "off the shelf" pensions, life assurance, insurance and investment products to their fans, or even offering them credit cards and loans.

direct broker and for the past month has been steadily signing up Premiership and First Division clubs.

Other clubs have played with the idea. Crystal Palace, for example, had a stab at offering general insurance products to their fans with Palace Direct, via a brokerage called Torch.

As Mr Zeidler says, the idea has failed to take off on a large scale up to now. Part of the problem lies in that general insurance requires a combination of competitive rates and the ability to accept as large a variety of insurance risks as possible - everything from ageing grannies to 18-year-old drivers. That generally precludes many insurance companies, leaving the field to brokers.

But, Mr Zeidler adds: "[The market] is so competitive that [profit] margins to the insurance broker are tiny, especially if you are giving money back to the club. You cannot make it work unless you can handle very large volumes of business. Only one club, even the big ones, would struggle on their own to make it work."

There has also been a certain shyness among clubs to get involved since one of Scotland's biggest clubs, Celtic, had its fingers very badly burned over its much publicised Celtic PEP. Following on, as Mr Zeidler



Eye on the ball: Some clubs are already profiting from selling insurance to their fans

intends to, from relatively successful sales of motor insurance, the club, with the backing of the Prudential, launched the Celtic PEP in 1996.

The club received commission from every fan who signed up and, within months, 20,000 of them did so. The PEP was sold by an independent financial adviser called Caledonian Investments which, in a further twist, was owned by Paul Goodwin, nephew of Celtic and Scotland footballing legend, the late Jock Stein.

However, within a few more months the Fraud Squad was called in after more than

£500,000 went missing from clients' funds. Mr Goodwin was sentenced to 18 months imprisonment last year for his part in the fraud.

"Football clubs are very cagey and very protective of their brands," says Mr Zeidler. "Especially since the Celtic affair. But very few of them are aware of their marketing power. Post the Taylor report in 1990 - published the year after the Hillsborough disaster - there has been a change in the clubs and a change in the nature of the fans. Some 72 per cent of Premier League fans are in the ABC1 category now."

Manchester United, with one of the biggest fan bases of any club side in Europe, are a case in point. Some experts believe the club could make millions by diversifying into financial services. However, a spokeswoman says loftily: "Any link between financial services and Manchester United would be confidential and not for discussion." Watch out for the Man Utd PEP, then.

In insurance terms, said Mr Zeidler, there are underwriting advantages in that the affinity with a football club generates volume and repeat business and makes it worth while. Each time a policy is sold the club

gets around £10. So far, 2,000 football fans have called Direct Club, which he operates, for quotes and more than 200 have signed up for some form of insurance cover.

But Mr Zeidler is holding back from persuading clubs to launch their own branded investment products. "That's where the money is," he said. "But it is more controversial and the clubs are a bit reluctant to do it. We retain the facility to be able to do it, however."

So, is insurance from football clubs good value? The answer is that it appears to be at least as competitive as mainstream cover from some big providers.

For a 30-year-old single professional man living in London and driving a three-year-old VW Golf without a no-claims bonus, Derby County quoted a fully comprehensive price of £728.28. This slotted roughly into the middle, with the highest - Guardian Direct - at £786.83 and the lowest, through the AA, at £638.02.

One of Direct Club's first customers was David Clayton, the promotional manager of Nottingham Forest, who put Mr Zeidler's claims to the test.

"To my surprise, my wife and I managed to save around £200 on our household insurance, which was a major saving for us. Professionally, this is good for the club too, it helps extend our brand and our range of services and enables us to give something back to the fans."

Stephen McDowell works at Financial Adviser.

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PERSONAL FINANCE JOURNALIST OF THE YEAR

What's wrong with making a fast buck

Am I a despot? Or, more accurately, is it possible for an article to be published in this section with which I do not entirely agree? The answer to these questions must be yes and no, judging by the appearance this week of a piece by David Prosser in the survey on investment trusts on pages 6 to 8.

The argument centres on whether it is always beneficial for investors when so-called "arbitrageurs" buy up shares in their investment trusts in the hope of making a swift killing. This happens when the "discount" - the difference between a trust's share price and the value of its assets - narrows significantly.

At present, there is an average discount of 12 per cent between them, meaning you can buy £1-worth of assets held by an investment trust for 88p. Arbitrageurs have been snaffling up investment trust shares and forcing them to "re-organise" - either wind themselves up and sell off the shares, or convert into unit trusts, or offer a cash opt-out to those who want to sell up and go.

David notes that in doing so, they can add value to a trust's shares and, by implication, benefit smaller investors. Moreover, canny investors who spot investment trusts where there is a huge (and recoverable) discount between the underlying asset value and the share price, could also gain.

All true. Except that what is not always considered is whether some of these changes are to the long-term benefit of investment trust shareholders. For example, if you convert to a unit trust you are likely to face higher

annual management costs on your investment. If you opt to liquidate your shares, it may be at the expense of an immediate capital gains tax liability.

Almost by definition, arbitrageurs are typically in-and-out merchants, mostly interested in making a fast buck. Insofar as they have forced investment trusts to re-organise themselves for the benefit of all shareholders, well and good. However, smaller savers who are in for the longer-term may not always find themselves benefiting from their co-investors' money-making strategies.

A few weeks ago, I asked the Benefits Agency to tell me how much state pension I will get when I retire in a few decades' time. The actual result hardly matters (though it certainly won't be enough to pay for all my expensive habits). What interested me were the mechanics of the exercise, which even gives a breakdown of how much will be paid should I choose to stop work early. Fascinating and frightening stuff. It's enough to want to make you save hard.

You too can ask for a pension projection by calling the Retirement Pensions Forecast unit, on 0191-218 7585, and asking staff there to send you form BR19.

Should you feel retirement planning is worth investigation, *The Independent* is offering a free 26-page guide on the subject, sponsored by Eagle Star, a low-cost personal pension provider. The guide is, however, genuinely independent. You can ask for one by calling 0800 776666.



THE MAKEOVER
Name: Eric Hamilton
Age: 54
Occupation: Mechanical engineer
The problem: His principal concerns are the adequacy of income in retirement for himself and his wife, whether his wife should join the NHS Pension Scheme, planning for the possibility of long-term care, putting a money aside for grandchildren, and a PEP for his wife.
The advice: Eric's wife should join the NHS scheme and also set up a corporate-bond PEP. The couple should also consider investing half their current building society balance in a distribution bond.

Eric Hamilton works for General Accident, the insurer about to merge with Commercial Union (CU). His wife, 50, is a part-time nursing assistant. The couple, who are in good health, have a married daughter, 23, a 21-year-old son at university and one grandchild.

Eric is a member of a non-contributory final salary pension scheme and, because of his very long service, at normal retirement at 60 he will be entitled to a full two-thirds pension. He has death-in-service benefits worth four-times salary, plus 50 per cent spouse's pension on his death. His wife, as a part-timer, has recently become eligible to join the NHS pension scheme, but they are not sure if it is worth while. The NHS scheme pays one-eighth of final salary per year of service, plus tax-free cash, and requires a member's contribution of 6 per cent. The adviser, David Holland, managing director at RK Harrison, independent financial advisers with offices throughout the UK. Head office: 19/21 Great Tower Street, London EC3R 5AQ. 0171-929 9300.

The advice: Eric and his wife jointly own a house worth £150,000, which has



Tax benefit: Eric Hamilton should look at distribution bonds. NewsTeam

an outstanding Abbey National mortgage of £28,000. The loan is on an interest-only basis and Eric pays around £150 per month interest, but this is reduced by an employer's mortgage subsidy to around £90 per month, plus the cost of four General Accident (GA) policies for terms ranging from 30 to 10 years. The estimated maturity value of the combined policies, maturing between 2000 and 2004, will be around £100,000, leaving him with £72,000 af-

ter he has cleared his mortgage debt.

Eric is investing £100 per month into a CU corporate-bond personal equity plan (PEP), currently worth £7,000, and has just started a Halifax tax-exempt special savings account (Tessa) with a £3,000 payment. He intends to maintain maximum Tessa payments, putting £9,000 in over five years.

He and his wife own a small number of shares, comprising GA, Halifax and utilities, worth around £20,000, of

which £10,000 is represented by GA. He and his wife have building society accounts with Bradford & Bingley and Britannia building societies, with a current value of around £10,000.

He also has a GA Portfolio Bond, into which he invested £10,000 in the with-profit fund, which has grown to £13,000. The couple's attitude to risk is in the middle, assuming cash deposits at one end and very high risk at the other.

Eric has spare income which would enable him to save £200 per month. Assuming he maintains his investments of £100 per month into the corporate-bond PEP and continues to make maximum payments into the Tessa, by 60 it is estimated he will have a fund of around £170,000, allowing for the surplus under the four maturing endowment policies. If applied to current annuity rates for a male aged 60, this will provide an initial gross pension of £1,080 plus 50 per cent widow's pension.

His wife should join the NHS scheme at the earliest opportunity, which will take 6 per cent of her salary. The employer is probably paying at least a further 7 or 8 per cent to the scheme as an average funding rate and, because she is above the average age for the NHS scheme, she will receive disproportionately greater value from it.

She should also contribute the maximum additional voluntary contributions (AVCs) of 9 per cent of her salary and explore the various options which are available. If there is a fixed-pension option, or even added years, this would generally be preferable to money purchase, due to current, very low annuity rates.

On the basis that Eric is happy to continue contributing to his corporate-bond PEP, we would recommend his wife considers a corporate-bond PEP with Aberdeen Prolific Unit Trust Managers, which has marginally lower charges than CU's similar product, but significantly better performance.

While the current share portfolio is small, some of the shares have per-

formed very well. Records were unavailable to enable calculations to be made for potential capital gains tax (CGT), but these could easily be hessed in the £6,800 allowance from 6 April.

Eric, however, does not wish to sell his portfolio and, since bed-and-breakfasting is no longer viable following the Budget, he could consider a new manoeuvre which has been given the inelegant title of "bed and spousing", where one married partner sells shares and the other buys them back. Transfers between spouses are deemed not to have yielded either a profit or loss for CGT purposes. Alternatively, it would be possible to "bud and PEP", in effect selling the shares and then buying them back through a PEP.

With regard to the £10,000 in the two building societies, I would recommend at least £5,000 be invested in the Sun Life distribution bond, to maximise medium- to long-term capital growth on a tax-efficient basis, with the prospect of taking a regular rising income at any stage in the future.

The highest instant access account on offer is through Northern Rock under its Save Direct Instant Postal Account, which currently offers 7.8 per cent, including a 0.25 per cent bonus.

For his grandchild, and possible future grandchildren, Eric could consider a friendly society investment where amounts up to £25 per month, or £270 per year, qualify for full tax exemption. Timbridge Wells Equitable Friendly Society Bond offers reasonable charges, with good fund performance.

Should ill health strike before retirement, Eric would probably have good protection through his pension scheme but he should check the rules.

If Eric and his wife wish to consider cover of, say £1,500 per month long-term care benefit, PPP Lifetime Care would cost £63.28, or a single premium of £13,074, for Eric and £71.46 per month, or £21,455 single premium, for a similar benefit for his wife.

Spotlight: Interest Zone children's account from Coventry Building Society

The Product: Interest Zone children's account from Coventry Building Society.

The Deal: Get them young and they are yours for life, as they say. This week it's the turn of Coventry, which is offering 7.75 per cent gross on savings in Interest Zone, the building society's young people's account.

Minimum savings are £1, up to

a maximum of £5,000. Interest can be paid tax free on completion of a R85 form available from the society.

Plus Point: Coventry claims the new rate makes this the UK's leading instant access account for children. Unlike with some other kids' accounts, there are no penalties on withdrawals.

Interest Zone "comes complete with passbook and a specially designed wallet", as the blurb says. There are no other freebies, just a top interest rate.

Drawbacks and Risks: Marketing experts argue that to win young people themselves over to a savings account, you must offer sweeteners - money boxes, stickers, magazines,

discount cards, CDs - to hook them in. They will remember you as they grow older.

Coventry's no-frills product heads in the opposite direction and is probably aimed at mums and dads opening accounts on their young children's behalf - though maybe kids in their early teens don't fall for all this stuff anyway.

The account is not postal-based, so if you do not live within Coventry's base area (Sheffield to Oxford, Stourbridge to Milton Keynes and points in-between) you can't sign up.

Marks out of five: Four. If you don't live in the area, try Britannia, Bradford & Bingley and Nationwide. They all have good rates.

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We can fill our adverts with as many performance tables and statistics as you like, but at the end of the day you need to find out for yourself which pension's right for you.

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COLLECT TO INVEST: JOHN WINDSOR

A bullish feeling for highland art

After nosediving in the early 1990s, prices for Scottish Colourists are heading north once more



The spirit of the glens: 'Highland Cattle' by Louis Bosworth Hurt is estimated £3,000-£5,000 at Sotheby's this month

Why should the value of corny pictures of highland cattle have anything to do with a sophisticated portrait of a *Girl in White*?

The short answer is that both are by Scottish artists and that paintings by the four so-called Scottish Colourists, such as Samuel Peploe, who painted *Girl in White* in 1909, are leading prices for Scottish paintings – highland cattle included – by the nose.

Those big-horned beasts may be dishevelled, mired and standing in the rain at the cheaper end of the market. But their unique selling point – so obvious, but missed by art buffs who still make jokes about granny's sitting room as they pass them by in the Portobello Road – is that they are ethnic.

And Scottish ethnic – don't ask me why – is more potent than English ethnic, at least in the art market. In London, Sotheby's and Christie's regularly pick out Scottish pictures consigned to their Modern Brit sales and bundle them off to their Scottish salerooms. They know that the Scottish pictures in general have acquired an international following – among the rich MacWhatsits in America and the highland romantics on the Continent – whereas Modern Brits, apart from the big four (Spencer, Bacon, Auerbach, Freud), have not.

Even a watercolour of a sun-drenched Spanish bullfighting scene – not an image likely to appeal to an Aberdeen Angus – has been given a place in Sotheby's sale of Scottish pictures at Hopetoun House, West Lothian, on 20 April. It was painted by a Scot, Joseph Crawhall (1861-1913). Estimate: £15,000-£20,000. Scots wha' hae.

The Colourists are Scotland's big four: besides Peploe (1871-1935) there was John Ferguson (1874-1961), Leslie Hunter (1879-1937) and Francis Cadell (1883-1937). Dour

they were not. They are Britain's post-Impressionists – bright, vibrant and painterly.

Small wonder, then, that collectors of Impressionist art – Americans, continentalers and the Japanese (when they have any money) – have taken a shine to the Scottish Colourists. But try finding the Scottish Colourists' names, or even "Scottish Colourists", in art reference books published south of the border, and you will get some idea of how Sassenachs have sidelined Scottish art.

Impressionist prices, of course, lead the peaks and troughs of the art market. And now that Impressionist prices are creeping up again, following the recession, so are the prices of the Impressionistic Scottish Colourists and the prices of Scottish pictures in general. The ethnic dimension – expressed in the rise of Scottish nationalism – can only help boost the market.

Back in 1988, that *Girl in White* by Peploe fetched a sensational £506,000 at Christie's sale of Scottish Colourists in Glasgow – five-times estimate and

still the record price for a Scottish Colourist. It had been cunningly put on pre-sale view among French Impressionist paintings awaiting auction in London.

Christie's Alexander Meadows had launched dedicated Colourist sales in Glasgow the previous year. His sumptuous hardback sale catalogues of Colourists were issued annually until after the crash of 1991. And what a crash it was. The Colourists went down the drain with the Impressionists. Prices halved. Christie's Colourist sales were axed.

But like the Impressionists, they are making a comeback. Mr Meadows resumed his Colourist sales in Glasgow last November, when 56 lots raised a total of £772,707. A Peploe, *Pink Acaia and Oranges*, made £89,500. Not a patch on the hardback years, during which the 1985 sale raised £1.8m. But the sale was a 100 per cent sell-out.

Which leaves those woolly cattle a little less mired. Christie's next general sale of pictures in Scotland is not until 28 May in Edinburgh (when the only

known life-size portrait of John Brown, Queen Victoria's gillie, will be estimated £100,000 – £150,000) and Christie's Colourists not until 12 November in Glasgow. But at Sotheby's sale at Hopetoun House on 20 April there are some estimates for cattle-in-landscape paintings that can only be called bullish.

In the Highlands – big, 50in by 40in – by one of the leading painters of highland cattle, Louis Hurt (1856-1924), is estimated £20,000-£30,000. Three years ago, £12,000-£18,000 might have been expected. Two similar but smaller paintings of Hurt's are estimated £3,000-£5,000 and £5,000-£10,000. Only £2,000-£3,000 would have been hoped for three years ago.

At Christie's general picture sale in Edinburgh last November, a magnificent Breanski made £32,200 – above the £20,000-£30,000 estimate. And a 20in by 30in Hurt – similar to the one being offered by Sotheby's – made £19,550, well above its £8,000-£12,000 estimate.

On the coat-tails of Hurt there is

William Watson (flourished 1866-1900, died 1921). His prices have begun to move up only in the past year. He is less atmospheric than Hurt, but his *Highland Cattle Wandering* is estimated £4,000-£6,000. A year ago, Sotheby's would have been happy to get £3,000-£5,000 for it.

The painting to watch is the Peploe *Still Life With Apples* of about 1925, which is estimated £40,000-£60,000. That is what it might have fetched 10 years ago. Are prices for the Colourists nearing their peak? Not yet. The sign of that happening will be when Peploes in the £25,000-plus price range start to venture into the saleroom. Until then, unless the economy drags the market down, as it did last time – which is unlikely – prices will continue to head north. So should you.

Sotheby's Scottish Pictures sale is at Hopetoun House, South Queensferry, West Lothian on Monday 20 April (6pm). Inquiries 0171-293 5000 and from 18 April 0131-319 14245. Christie's Scotland 0141-332 8134.



ROBIN AMLOT
INTERNET
INVESTOR

A one-stop shop for information on the new ISAs

It was inevitable really if you think about it. MBO Partners, the people behind netPEP, the UK's first web-based personal equity plan (PEP) and FTSE 100 tracker unit trust, have unveiled their new website. It is called netISA.

Of course, it is not offering you the opportunity to invest in an Individual Savings Account yet. What the site does set out to provide is a one-stop shop, with all the information you need about the new tax-efficient savings vehicle. It is an admirable aim. The site does not yet succeed in fulfilling it but it has made a start.

What you can see on netISA is a commentary, updated monthly, on developments in the run-up to the launch of the new accounts. There is a page showing you the Government's pronouncements. This currently shows an extract from the Budget speech and has the text of the Budget press release on ISAs from the Inland Revenue. In addition, there is a "press cuttings" page and a page of "your questions answered". You can submit questions using the site's feedback form.

The site also intends to create a page of links to other websites with information about ISAs. So far, this consists of one link to Autif, the Association of Unit Trusts and Investment Funds. Others will, no doubt, follow.

None of this comes free. You do not actually pay money but you are required to register to use the site, which means MBO Partners is building up a handy e-mailing database of potential purchasers of its ISA when the time comes.

It is early days but the promise of useful things to come is there, including the prospect later this year of a personal "ISAselector". This

will be a questions and answers routing system to help you identify what kind of ISA might suit your individual needs and investment aims and, further on, identify which ISA providers would offer the best options for you.

Richard Carswell of netPEP claims: "We want to extend the efficiencies of the internet to would-be ISA investors in a way that 'reads their financial palms' to help route them to the ISA provider that suits their needs."

One useful point the site makes is that, as private investors, we tend to be rather more long-suffering than is good for our financial health. Somehow, inertia sets in when it is time to sack a money manager. Now that PEPs do not have to be transferred into ISAs next April, there is no automatic prompt to review our investments' performance. So, take this opportunity to check your PEP performance and, if your plan manager is a dud, switch!

Finally, another site that has had a serious face-lift recently is the top watchdog's, now the Financial Services Authority. Anybody who made a note of the old Securities and Investments Board website will automatically find themselves looking at the FSA site.

It subsumes all the information on the old SIB site and has been redesigned to be easier to read. In addition, it details the other organisations which will shortly become part of the FSA and there are links to other regulatory websites. The site will become more detailed as the legal framework is put in place later this year.

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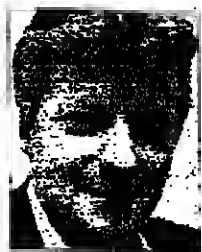
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Liverpool Victoria is offering a free guide to Individual Savings Accounts, the new savings products set to be introduced in April 1999 to replace PEPs and TESSAs. Call 0800 448811.
Manchester & Salford Hospital Saturday Fund has introduced a new funeral insurance cash plan. Open to cash plan members under 60, it pays out £1,500 at death. Contributions are 90p a week. Call Stephen Newton for details on 0161-881 5135.
Highway Motor Policies, a Lloyd's insurance syndicate, has launched an insurance policy covering motorcyclists with a history of convictions and bans. Call 0181-889 3333.

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Vanguard manoeuvres to open up Europe



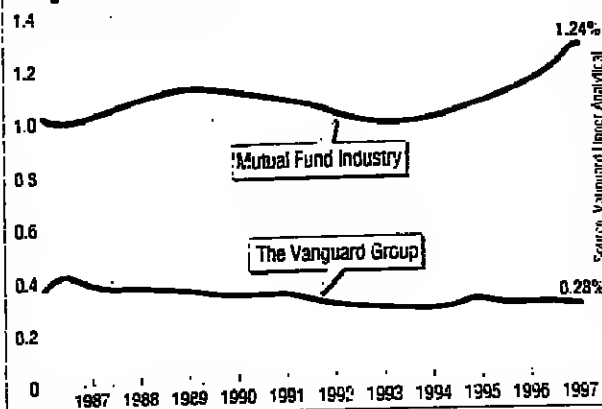
THE JONATHAN DAVIS COLUMN

Blink and you may have missed it, but one of the most interesting news stories of the week was the announcement the US fund management company Vanguard is preparing to try to break into the European market. It is in the process of getting final regulatory approvals to market a series of offshore funds, based in Dublin. Initially, its aim is to try to win a chunk of the growing institutional pension fund market in the UK, Netherlands and Belgium. Well, you may say, so what? The firm has no immediate plans to launch a unit trust or OEIC in the UK, although it will be surprising if they do not do so before long. And it expects to take several years to establish a meaningful presence in the pension fund market, which is notoriously conservative.

Nevertheless, the news is interesting on several counts. For a start, Vanguard is one of the genuine heavy hitters in the global fund management scene, ranking second only to Fidelity as the world's largest mutual fund company. Just as interesting is the way it operates. No other fund management company has quite the same ethos. As Vanguard has no shareholders, but is owned by the funds it manages, investors get the firm's service at cost. As a matter of policy, it pays no sales commission to intermediaries, and prides itself on having the lowest expense ratio of any fund management company. The company describes itself as the only mutually owned fund management business in the US. The other thing that marks Vanguard out is that it was one

of the pioneers of passively managed funds – that is, funds which aim to track the market indices. Tracker funds are the lowest cost funds you can buy and are particularly well-suited to pension fund planning. The firm has been a leading promoter and beneficiary of the growing awareness that most actively managed funds are simply not worth the handsome performance fees they charge. If you accept that point, it follows that most managed equity funds should be regarded as a commodity rather than a specialist product. The lesson of Vanguard's success is that low cost does not have to be incompatible with quality. The facts certainly seem to bear out Vanguard's boast that its mutual funds are the cheapest in the industry. Its

Expense ratios: Vanguard versus Industry, %



average expense ratio last year (ie how much of its investors' funds were absorbed by management costs) was 0.28 per cent, less than a quarter of the industry average. If you look at total costs, including the impact of sales commission, it claims an even greater cost advantage – 0.5 per cent per annum against an industry average of 1.5 to 2.0 per cent a year. Note that these are US averages; the comparable UK figures are at least as

high, if not higher, once you factor in the bid/offer spread. As I have noted before, in a low inflation world modest percentages can make a huge impact on long-term returns, thanks to the power of compound interest. For example, suppose you pay £6,000 a year (the current PEP limit) into an equity-based pension fund for 25 years. Suppose also you expect the fund to grow on average at 9 per cent per annum over that period, in line with the long-run real return on equities. How much difference does it make if you pay the equivalent of 2 per cent a year in fees rather than 0.5 per cent over that time? Answer: a hell of a lot. The value of the fund, according to my maths, on the first basis will be: £94,279 after 10 years, £249,385 after 20 years and £366,906 after 25 years. Factor in the lower fees and the sums come out as £104,281, £305,171 and £474,719. In broad terms, the value of your fund will be 29 per cent – or £107,000 – greater after 25 years. Put another way, your fund manager has to consistently outperform the market by around 1.65 per cent per annum to earn back the cost of his higher fees.

While I have no idea whether Vanguard will succeed in Europe, I do know that if they think the European market is full of over-priced, poor value funds, as they clearly do, then everyone else in the industry is going to have to take notice. Call me a hopeless optimist, but I see it as further evidence that smarter consumers, willing to shop around, are starting to win the war against over-oligopoly providers.

UNDERSTANDING THE STOCK MARKET: JOHN ANDREW

Welcome to the paperless future

How to choose between holding a 'beneficial interest' or holding on to share certificates



End of the paper chase: Traditional share certificates are on the way out

The traditional proof of share ownership is a certificate bearing the name of the shareholder and the number of shares held in the company. In an effort to streamline administration, there is a move towards "paperless dealing" with certificates being replaced by a computer record held by a nominee company.

Many private investors prefer certificates as they are the only tangible link between them and the company which they partly own. There certainly is a feeling of security to have a certificate as proof of an investment.

Inevitably, at some stage in the future, there will be an increasing pressure towards the paperless form of ownership. Just as there was an initial reaction against the abandonment of pass-books for bank savings accounts in favour of statements, investors will eventually accept the demise of certificates.

Meanwhile, shareholders have the choice between a paper proof of ownership and using a nominee to hold their shares. Although some brokers have already established a two-tier commission structure, with shareholders having certificates paying more for their deals, anyone currently wishing to remain traditional is not obliged to change.

So what is a nominee? It is a company established to hold shares and other securities on behalf of investors. Normally operated by a bank or broker, the nominee is the legal owner of the shares. However, the investors have the "beneficial interest", which means they are

entitled to the dividends paid and any increase or decrease in the value of the shares.

Many stockbrokers are recommending that investors place their shares into the broker's nominee company. Although this is not a requirement, it does have certain advantages. The speed and certainty of the transfer of holdings means that the broker is able to give a more efficient service.

For example, when telephoning with a sell order, the broker has immediate access to the "shares" and, therefore, the investor will receive the proceeds of the sale five days later. However, an investor who has a share certificate will have to forward this to the broker. The proceeds will only be paid when the certificate has been received. The paperless system is certainly more convenient for an active investor.

When deciding whether to place shares in a nominee account, consideration must be given to several factors. Here are the questions you should ask the broker.

■ What are the charges?
■ Will there be any get all

information and other shareholder rights in those companies in which you hold shares?

For example, some companies will not grant "perks" to shareholders using a nominee, while some nominee companies charge for supplying annual reports and accounts and papers relating to annual general meetings.

■ How often are dividends sent?

■ If only sent at intervals, will you receive interest on the money while it is being held by the nominee?

■ What is the extent of insurance which the broker carries to guard against fraud and other contingencies for his business, including assets held by the nominee company?

■ What compensation arrangements are in force in the event of the service provider going bankrupt or being wound up?

Certainly, charges vary between providers. It is essential to obtain full details of these and the cost of any alternative which may be available. However, do remember, that if there is say, a £20

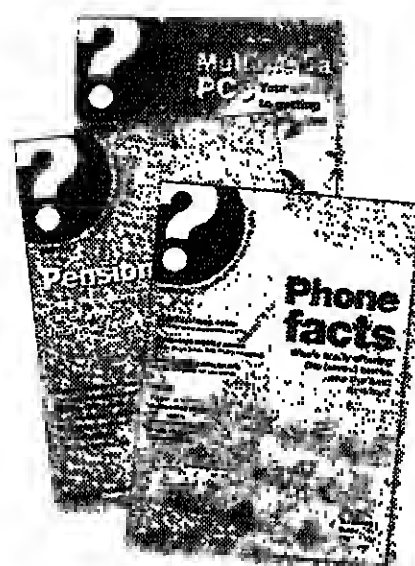
charge for supplying a copy of the annual report, an investor can slide-step the fee by asking for a copy direct from the company.

All the assets held by a nominee company should be quite clearly distinguished from the assets of the stock-broking firm. Additionally, the broker should have insurance against fraud. In the event of the firm's failure, your assets should, therefore, be quite safe.

In the event of the nominee company failing and there being insufficient assets in the nominee account, it is possible for a claim to be made from the Investors' Compensation Scheme. However, this should be viewed as a last resort back-up. Claims are limited to £48,000.

Providing nothing occurs to undermine the confidence in nominees, it is a dead cert that the life of the traditional share certificate is limited. However, I for one will not abandon the paper chase until I have to, or the additional costs outweigh the feeling of well-being. Call me old fashioned, but there is comfort in having a certificate as proof of an investment.

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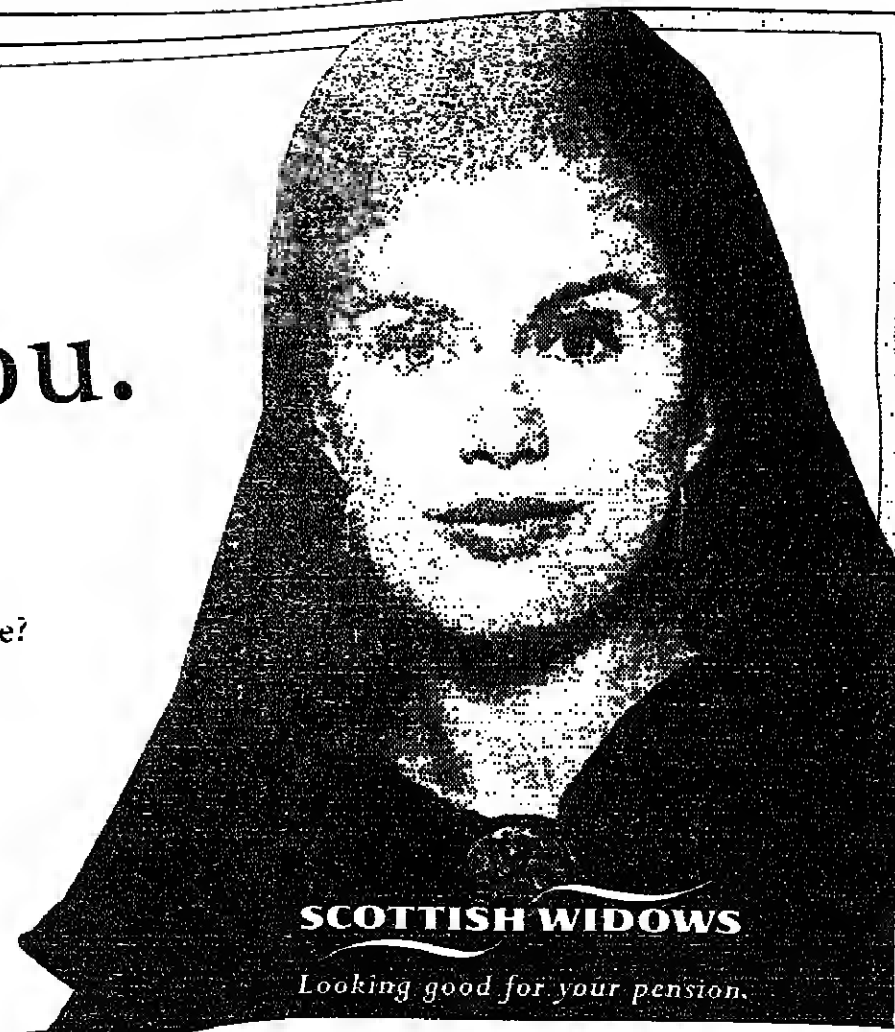
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A division of the spoils

Split-capital trusts aim to please all investors all of the time, whether they want income or growth.

David Prosser explains

The trouble with most investment trusts is their dual personality. On the one hand, they're charged with increasing the size of your capital investment. But investors usually also want income, in the form of dividends. So to varying degrees, managers have to please two audiences.

Enter split-capital trusts. Splits offer at least two types of share class – sometimes more – so that investors can buy shares tailor made for their needs. They also have a winding-up date, when the trust will sell its assets and distribute the proceeds to shareholders.

This focused structure is attractive. Income seekers can buy a split's income shares, for example, without worrying that the manager's strategy will be compromised in an attempt to produce capital growth.

However, be careful with splits. "I'm not sure investors always understand the risks," says Annabel Brodie Smith, of the Association of Investment Trust Companies.

Some split trusts' shares are pretty risky. When a split winds up, there is a pecking order which says who gets paid first. Investors at the front of the queue are at less risk of losing money. In return, they expect less exciting returns. Further down the ranks, investors hope for bigger bucks. They accept more risk.

Zero-dividend preference shares are the least



risky type of split-capital trust share. They pay no income during the life of the split but shareholders get a fixed capital sum when the trust winds up. Mind you, there is a risk that the trust will not have enough assets when the time comes to meet this commitment. But zeros almost always have the first claim on what assets there are.

Zeros are popular with investors who need a certain capital sum on a certain date, to pay school fees, perhaps. Barring disaster, you can be sure the money will arrive. Moreover, since zeros pay no income, you do not pay income tax on the shares. You won't pay capital gains tax either, unless any profit you make takes you over your annual CGT allowance – £6,800 from 6 April.

Stepped preference shares are also low risk, though they are becoming increasingly rare. Investors get a fixed capital sum when the trust winds up, paid once the zeros commitment has been met (occasionally before). Stepped preference shareholders also get fixed dividends each year, which rise at a guaranteed rate.

Income shareholders, meanwhile, usually get all the income generated by a split-capital trust after the stepped preference shareholders. If there are any, have been paid out. However, when the split winds up, income shareholders just receive the value of the shares at issue, but only if the trust has enough assets to meet this commitment once other shareholders have been paid.

There are two variations on the income-share theme. Annuity shares offer a high income but holders get a tiny sum back on wind-up. Investors in income and residual capital shares, sometimes called highly geared ordinary shares, get all the income from the split, after any prior charges, plus all the capital left at wind-up once all other shareholders have been paid.

Capital shares, which are never issued by a trust with highly geared ordinary shares, offer the highest risks. You get no income but all the capital when the split winds up, after all other shareholders have been paid. The worst-case scenario is that the split's investment performance is so bad there is nothing left to pay you on wind-up. But if the split does well, capital shares offer potentially sizeable profits.

Some splits offer two share classes, others are more complicated. Split-capital trust managers quote hurdle rates for each class of their shares. These show the annual growth rate the split must achieve on its investments for investors to get their capital back on wind-up. Compare hurdle rates carefully – the higher the rate, the riskier the share.

However, if you know what you are doing, split-capital trust shares are very useful because they produce specific types of return that are handy for financial planning. The key is the phrase "if you know what you're doing". Graham Hooper, of independent adviser Chase de Vere, warns: "People don't always understand the technicalities, so it's important to take advice before buying."

David Prosser is features editor of *Investors' Chronicle*.

The Association of Investment Trusts publishes fact sheets on split-capital trusts. Call 0171-431 5222

Better returns on asset values

Professional vultures are moving in on trusts trading at deep discounts. David Prosser considers the pickings for small investors

The £52bn investment trust sector is having a rough ride. As a whole, it produced a 9 per cent return over 1997, not even half as good as the performance of the UK stock market. Worse, from managers' point of view, a group of opportunistic investors is circling the sector, picking on vulnerable trusts one by one.

To find the cause of the current crisis, go back to 1993. This was the height of investment trust popularity, so many managers launched a string of new funds or raised more money for their existing trusts. The mood was buoyant, with demand exceeding supply for many launches.

Since then, it's all been downhill. Most investment trusts, especially some of those new issues, have performed disappointingly. Even more damaging, the share prices of many trusts have slipped to wider and wider discounts to the value of their assets.

With too many investment trust shares in issue and prolonged middling returns, the situation became serious last year. The average trust discount reached 13.5 per cent, but that masked many discounts of over 20 per cent.

John Szymanowski, an SBC Warburg analyst, reckons something has to give. "Funds with mediocre performances, poor strategies and wide discounts are going to be picked off," he warns.

And that's exactly what has been happening. Several large predatory investors have taken big stakes in some of the weakest trusts and forced change. Their strategy is simple: if you buy assets at a big discount to their value and then make the trust take action to reduce that discount, you profit without the value of the trust's assets having to grow.

In fact, two types of predator are at work. First, stronger trusts, such as Scottish Value, have been buying into

their weaker rivals and putting pressure on their boards. Advance UK, christened a "vulture fund" by many when it was launched last year, raised £50m from investors backing this philosophy. Second, privately owned US companies, known in the industry as arbitrageurs, are pursuing a similar strategy.

Initially, the predators use their stakes to press the weaker trusts' boards into cutting discounts through restructurings, share buy-backs or conversions to unit trusts. If this doesn't work, they have several options, in some cases forcing takeovers or the replacement of a trust's manager.

In high-profile victories, the arbitrageurs have even forced Kleinwort Overseas and Fleming Far Eastern, two large funds, to close, selling their assets and distributing the proceeds to shareholders. In response to predatory activity, a string of trusts, including Baring Tribune, Broadgate, Continental Assets, Henderson Greenfriar and Overseas, are all preparing proposals to reduce discounts.

Not surprisingly, discounts have fallen as a result of all this activity. But Mr Szymanowski thinks the battle is far from over. "There's further to go," he says. "Performance itself is no longer a guarantee of survival. Not only must you perform, you must also keep your discount down."

Peter Walls, an investment trust analyst at Credit Lyonnais, agrees. "I think more deals will be announced even though there's so many already on the menu," he says. Mr Walls believes the opportunism of the predators, combined with the dissatisfaction of many smaller shareholders, will result in yet more rationalisation.

This is all good news for investors. Falling discounts will unlock the value held by many trusts. In some cases, restructurings and wind-ups have quickly released sizeable profits from trusts on wide discounts.

But be careful playing the game yourself. Small investors have less influence than the predators. And, as Mr Walls points out, poor performance negates the effect of lower discounts. "Buying on a 15 per cent discount is fine," he says, "but if you lose 30 per cent of the assets in six months, it's not very profitable."

David Prosser is features editor of *Investors' Chronicle*.

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8/INVESTMENT TRUST SURVEY

A look at what's on the table

Figuring out which funds to invest in is never easy.

Andrew Barker offers a guide

Everyone knows the warning "past performance is no guide to future performance" but, in the right context, past performance can provide valuable information when considering investment trusts. Before you use performance figures, however, it's worth looking at how they are calculated.

Performance and costs

The main thing to bear in mind with investment trusts is that they are companies. They issue shares which investors buy and sell, and they also hold other companies' shares, which make up their portfolio of underlying assets.

All shares have a bid and offer spread. The bid is the lower price, at which you can sell the shares, and the offer is a higher price, at which you can buy. Most spreads for investment trusts are below 1 per cent. When looking at performance, shares are quoted on a mid-market basis, ie the price between bid and offer.

Other costs to be taken into account includes stamp duty, a

fixed charge levied on all share purchases, currently 0.5 per cent.

The costs of buying and selling vary. Stockbrokers tend to charge commission based on the value of the transaction. If you don't need advice, there are low cost, execution-only dealing services which, again, usually charge a percentage of the transaction.

The cheapest method, however, tends to be that of investment trust savings and investment schemes, where charges start as low as nil.

Working out a meaningful average based on all this is not easy. Most performance figures for investment trusts are therefore calculated on a mid-market basis, excluding costs.

Unit trusts can only be bought and sold through the managers, so the bid/offer spread can be precisely determined for each unit trust and performance calculated on an offer-to-bid basis including all charges.

Whenever the Association of Investment Trust Companies calculates average performances we use offer-to-offer figures for unit trusts. These exclude charges and are therefore comparable with mid-market figures for investment trusts.

Share price and NAV performance
Figures based on share price performance will obviously be of

immediate interest to investors as they give a guide to the return to shareholders. Net asset value (NAV) performance, on the other hand, is the performance of the underlying portfolio that drives the share price and offers a valuable guide to the management of the underlying assets of the investment trust. The NAV is the value of the total assets held, less any liabilities, divided by the number of shares issued by the investment trust. It is therefore directly comparable with the share price.

Total Return

Performance figures are usually calculated on a total-return basis. This simply means that income as well as capital is taken into account.

The share price total-return figures shown in our tables are based on a £100 investment over the period. It assumes shares were bought at the mid-market share price at the beginning and that any dividends received were reinvested to buy more shares. We assume the total investment was realised at the mid-market share price at the end of February 1998.

NAV total return is calculated in a similar way, assuming that £100 was invested in the NAV and that any income earned by the investment trust was reinvested in the assets.

Investment Trusts Ten-year performance

International: General	Rank	NAV total return ten years, %	Rank	Share price total return ten years, %
Law Debenture Corp	1	486.9	1	630.8
Personal Assets	2	443.4	2	535.1
Bankers	3	437.3	3	524.2
Millennium	4	399.3	4	466.6
Second Alliance	5	375.4	5	464.6
Scottish Mortgage				430.9
Size weighted average of sector		336.4		381.3
International: Income Growth	Rank	NAV total return ten years, %	Rank	Share price total return ten years, %
Murray International	1	358.1	1	417.6
Geopartners Trust of Scotland	2	338.9	2	336.5
British Assets	3	290.4	3	314.4
Size weighted average of sector		247.2		281.3
International: Capital Growth	Rank	NAV total return ten years, %	Rank	Share price total return ten years, %
Jupiter Primadonna	1	427.1	1	629.3
Investment Trust of Europe	2	419.7	2	529.6
English & Scottish	3	388.8	3	447.0
World	4	345.7	4	437.9
British Empire Securities	5	341.5	5	395.4
Size weighted average of sector		322.1		372.1

Comparing Like with Like
You can't compare a UK investment trust with a Far East specialist - the markets are vastly different and the recent strength of sterling will have had a big effect on the end result. It will be more helpful if you

decide on the risk profile you're prepared to accept and compare the performance of trusts within that sector: the more specialised the market, the higher the risk.

Compare the performance of the trusts within the sector on

both a NAV and share price total-return basis. You want trusts that deliver consistent performance on both counts.

Andrew Barker is chairman of the Association of Investment Trust Companies.

Investment Trusts Ten-year performance

UK: General	Rank	NAV total return ten years, %	Rank	Share price total return ten years, %
Mercury Keystone	1	460.2	1	575.2
Framlington	2	400.4	2	469.5
Framlington Growth	3	397.7	3	450.8
Albany	4	367.0	4	417.3
Edinburgh	5	362.0	5	448.1
Scottish Strategic		219.4		448.1
Size weighted average of sector		328.4		399.0
UK: Income Growth	Rank	NAV total return ten years, %	Rank	Share price total return ten years, %
City of London	1	450.2	1	552.6
Value & Income	2	410.5	2	488.3
Merchants	3	382.1	3	454.6
Investment Capital	4	375.1	4	427.5
Murray Income	5	371.9	5	403.8
Temple Bar		360.5		428.8
Size weighted average of sector		380.5		428.8

Geared up for better long-term performance

Gearing and discounts are two factors that offer investment trust investors the potential for better long-term performance and value for money.

"Gearing", which is simply a technical term for borrowing, is one way of enhancing the performance of the underlying assets of a trust. The funds can take out loans to buy more assets in the expectation that these will rise in value.

The loan has to be repaid at a later date but the more total assets rise in value the greater the proportional benefit to shareholders, because the value of the loan remains fixed. Effective gearing relies on the expertise of the manager. In rising markets, it enhances shareholders' returns but in falling markets it has a correspondingly negative effect. Good underlying performance is the most important factor in driving up the price of a trust's shares, so investors benefit from successful gearing.

Investment trust shares are valued in the stock market according to supply and demand. Most trade at a price that is lower than the underlying net asset value per share (NAV). This is called "trading at a discount".

The discount is the difference between the NAV of the assets held in the trust and its share price, calculated as a percentage of the NAV. For example, if the share price is 90p and the NAV is 100p, the discount is 10 per cent. If the share price rises above the NAV, it is trading at a premium. This is rare but it can occur when there is particularly high demand for the shares of a trust.

The investment trust industry's average discount currently stands at around 12 per cent. But

in the 1970s, discounts of well over 30 per cent were common. They narrowed significantly after the late 1980s, when the tax regime became more favourable and low-cost investment trust savings schemes and PEPs were launched. As a result, demand for the shares increased.

The narrowing of discounts to single figures in the early 1990s, however, encouraged new launches. This inevitably led to over-supply. Investment trust companies have a fixed number of shares in issue which they cannot readily reduce or increase in the way unit trusts can. When supply outstrips demand, discounts widen.

Investment trusts have no control over the discount but their boards of directors have a duty to shareholders to address poor performance, and they can do this in a number of ways. Savings schemes and PEPs, for example, have encouraged demand and enable investors to buy investment trust shares on a regular monthly basis or with an occasional lump sum at favourable rates.

Investment trusts can buy back some of their shares to reduce supply, although their ability to do this is limited. The Association of Investment Trust Companies is exploring ways of making buy-backs easier for investment trusts.

If asset performance is poor, the board may change the manager. If share price performance is poor, the board could wind up the company to enable shareholders to realise their investment nearer to the NAV. Alternatively, they could unbundle, changing to a unit trust; restructure, possibly into a split capital trust; or maybe

change the investment policy.

Action may be forced on a board. An investment trust on a wide discount, with an attractive portfolio of investments, may find itself the subject of a takeover bid. While takeovers may enable shareholders to realise investment at a value close to the NAV, the costs of the liquidation will reduce their return. So shareholders must weigh up the pros and cons of a possible quick profit today compared with the potentially greater, but longer-term, benefits of continuing to hold the investment.

Such corporate activity does not signify that the investment trust industry is coming to an end, as some critics have predicted. It's just the market's way of restoring balance when supply and demand are out of line.

So are discounts automatically a bad thing, as is often assumed? If you can buy a good quality product for lower than the retail price, you don't hesitate, and the same principle applies to investment trusts. If the investment trust has good underlying asset performance, it meets your investment criteria and is trading at a discount, consider it a buying opportunity.

Over the long-term, the discount pales into little significance where performance is concerned. And, historically, investment trusts have delivered excellent performance.

—Annabel Brodie Smith

Free information on investment trusts, including a factsheet on Investment Trust Discounts, is available from the AITC on 0171-531 5222.

Annabel Brodie Smith works for the Association of Investment Trust Companies.

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— 1997 Awards, Investment Trusts magazine



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Win the traffic-light grand prix

If getting to work quickly is the nut you want to crack, then the performance of the Gilera FXR 180 Runner is a sledgehammer. Commuting need never be dull again, with this insane hybrid of motorcycle and scooter. Martin Round reports

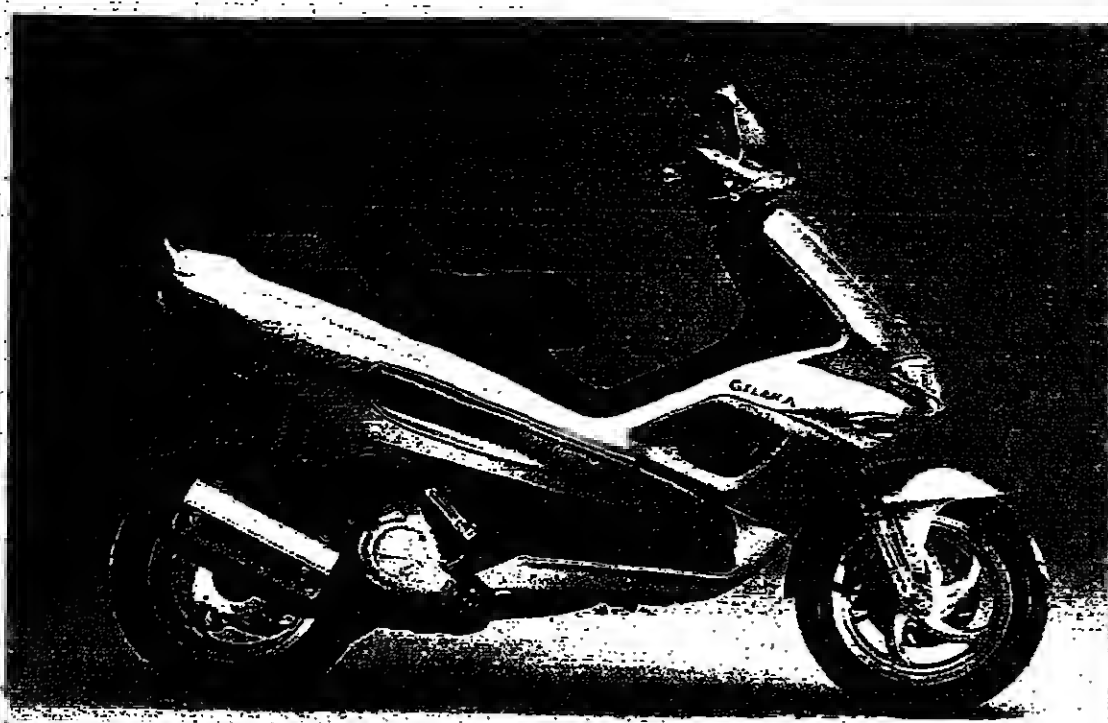
Fancy a race from the lights? If your car can't do 0-60 mph in 5.4 seconds, then don't bother. Many motorcycles can't match that, either. For a twist-and-go scooter to perform with such venom is simply unheard of. Or it was until now.

Britain has begun to wake up to the massive convenience offered by the latest generation of automatic scooters: light weight, manoeuvrability, and space to store a crash helmet. Piaggio, the Gilera's Italian manufacturer, is the first company to combine these features with traffic-terrorising performance.

Power for the Runner is supplied by a 180cc two-stroke engine with lubricating oil injection. The blistering acceleration is thanks to the 21hp engine, and the seamless variomatic transmission system. Automatic transmission in a car may mean less acceleration, but variomatic on a scooter means best use of the available power.

I found it all too easy to hold the throttle open a touch too long around town, and the constant engine revs give no indication that you may be doubling the 30mph limit. On the open road, the speedo can nudge 90mph downhill, though this feels maybe 50mph optimistic. Where the extra performance is most welcome is during overtaking. In as long as it takes to think about a manoeuvre and open the throttle, you can be past any A-road obstacle. Your next problem is slowing down again.

The greatest problem with the automatic transmission on today's scooters is the almost total absence of engine braking: hence the Gilera 180 needs all the brakes it can get. Thankfully Piaggio has endowed it with a 200mm front disc, gripped by a twin-piston sliding hydraulic caliper. The 140mm drum rear



Nose-bleed acceleration: the Gilera is the fastest production scooter yet to burn rubber on tarmac

Gilera Runner FXR 180
Price: £2,650; weight: 155kg
Engine: single cylinder 180cc, two stroke
Transmission: belt drive variomatic
Top speed: 85mph
Acceleration (0-60mph): 5.4 sec (claimed)

Rivals:
Italjet Formula 125: (£2,250): High-tech Latin lovely with hub-centre steering, but only one year warranty. The nearest rival sports scooter both looks and handles better than the Gilera, but the 114cc twin-cylinder motor is no match. Compared to the 125cc Runner, things are closer, but the 70mph, learner-legal Italjet is nearly £1,000 dearer.

Aprilia Leonardo 150: (£2,745): Arriving in April, this bigger-capacity version of the Aprilia's handsome 125cc four-stroke packs extra punch for an 80mph top speed. Acceleration and nimbleness would be improved if the 150cc machine went on a diet. **Honda Foresight 250:** (£3,999) Heavy, solid construction counts against it on acceleration, and make it less nimble in thick traffic, but it's a pleasure on the open road. Legendary build quality – but at a hefty price.

The Gilera sells for a not unreasonable £2,650 on the road. There is a 125cc learner-legal variant for £2,350 OTR, and even a 50cc version (£1,999) which can be ridden on a car licence. Still, the 180cc FXR remains the one to get, and the same goes for the 180cc Piaggio Hexagon, which shares the same superb motor.

As the road system gets increasingly strangled, you need a good strategy and the right weapon. The FXR is it.

The writer is assistant editor of 'Scooter International'.

brake helps to bring the machine to a halt quite sharply, but without fuss.

The chassis of the machine is unusual for a scooter, in that the area between the rider's legs is not open. Instead there is a high central tunnel in the bodywork, containing the fuel tank, battery and a "central rigidifying beam" which is supposed to improve handling.

The FXR runs on wide 12-in tyres and does handle acceptably for everyday use, but the engine encourages footlooseness. In that idiom the chassis can get rather upset, particularly on bumpy corners taken at speed. It needs

either better suspension, or a modicum of restraint from the pilot.

Build quality is pretty good, and Piaggio offers a three-year warranty, but there are still a few niggly points with the design. The turning circle is unusually large for a scooter, which takes the edge off its ability to filter through thick traffic. Also the mirrors don't adjust well, and the helmet bay under the seat is a tight fit with some helmets.

One thing that the Runner really could do with is extra security. It will be worth investing in a Piaggio plug-in alarm system or armoured cable lock.

A new take on the executive express

For the suited scooterist, Piaggio's new Hexagon has got everything bar the ashtray, writes Andy Gillard

Piaggio is claiming the crown as "king of the maxi" for its redesigned, new Hexagon model. And in a way, quite rightly so, because it was not until the launch of its first version in 1994 that the scooter-buying public began to take notice of this practical alternative. Now it is commonplace to find despatch riders and commuters alike battling through the traffic congestion in London on a Hexagon.

The new Hexagon is described by Piaggio as "the Second Generation Maxi Scooter", which may hum a little of grandeur but that's what it's all about. Gone are the old badges, which were a little tacky; they are replaced by an elegant chrome

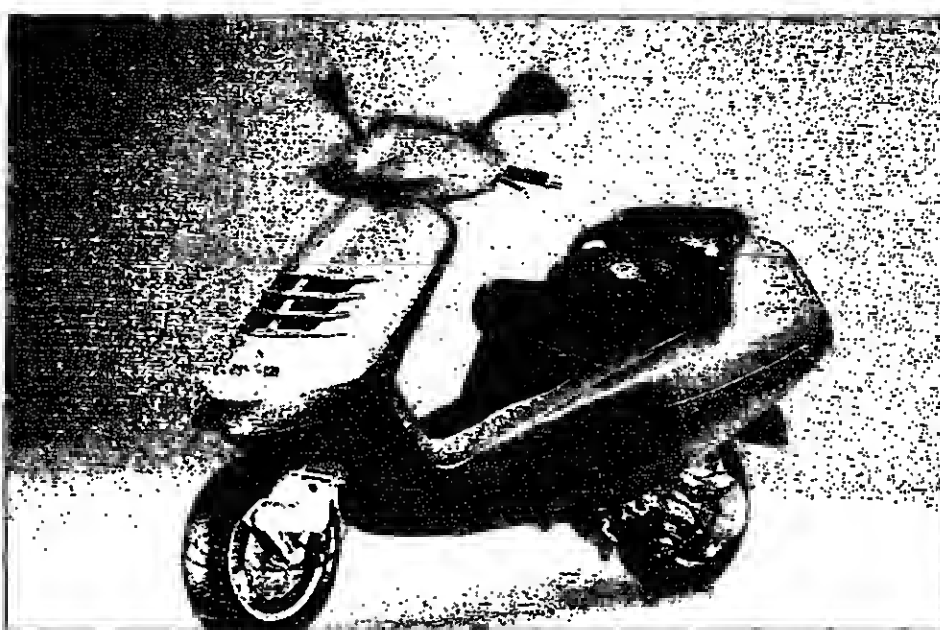
statement, not out of place in the company car park.

Additions include the mobile phone charger in the boot and the restyled back end which would suggest that this scooter is definitely to be parked in the "executive only" bays. Yes, a scooter with a boot, both carpeted and lit, with enough space to store a crash helmet, gloves and maybe your laptop and mobile, too. Practical touches have also been included, possibly at customers' advice, such as the retractable seat cover for when it rains and a digital clock on the dash.

Overall there is very little difference in the look of the new model. A slight skirt has been added to the legshields for a fit-

ter more weather protection while an extended handlebar cover offers the same to your fingers. The riding position is said to be improved, although the vertically challenged may still have trouble climbing aboard, but once they do they will find it a pleasure to ride.

Larger wheels, better brakes and uprated suspension go together to make it subtly, yet vastly improved from its predecessor. While appearing to be both long and cumbersome the Hexagon is surprisingly light and easy to throw around, being exceedingly nimble upon request. And, unlike the Japanese maxi scooters which appear to many as scaled-down motor-



All mod cons: the new Hexagon includes a carpeted and lit boot – with enough space for your helmet, laptop and mobile – a digital clock on the dash and a retractable seat cover

bikes, the Hexagon is far less awesome to the first time rider.

Hexagon's stablemate, the Gilera Runner, lends the two-stroke engines for the two models currently available priced at £2,799 (1X125) and £3,099 (1X180) OTR respectively. The Italians have certainly beaten

even the competition here because the LXT is £900 cheaper than its nearest rival, albeit the Japanese machines are both four stroke.

Performance is good, with 80mph achieved on the 180cc model, and with automatic transmission being smooth and

responsive to your throttle action, the Hexagon now becomes not only the ideal way to commute from the home counties to the West End, but a potential mile muncher at weekends too. Will the Hexagon replace the car during the summer-time? Maybe...

MY WORST CAR: JAMES WHALE'S RENAULT 4



Just thinking about that Renault brings back memories – all of them truly terrible. It was far and away the worst car I have ever owned. At the time, which was some point in the late Seventies, I was living in Northumberland and had bought this heap to transport hales of hay around. I had got a job on a radio station in Derby, which was good news.

The really bad news, however, was that the only form of transport I had was that terrible car. I literally tied it together with string, running pieces around the bonnet and on to the door to stop bits falling off. Obviously, it broke down – and I missed my first show.

I got towed to a garage and someone claimed that they could fix it. As soon as I got it into third gear, though, it ground to a halt. That was the start of endless problems. It is fair to say that the Renault was not a natural motorway car, especially when it had to cope with 150 miles a week. It was red – which was fortunate because at least you couldn't see the rust. Inside, it didn't even have proper seats; they were like deckchairs. Very uncomfortable.

If I had to sum it up, I'd say the Renault 4 was like a Citroën 2CV but not so sophisticated. It proved to me that the French aren't as stylish as they like to think they are.

I broke down on the motorway twice, which in my book is about the worst crime a motorist can commit. Even now I go ballistic when I see a car on the hard shoulder. How can they be so stupid? Which is why I had to get rid of that rotten rust-hucket. A car dealer offered me a tenner for it and I jumped at the offer. After that, I saw the light. The future of motoring for me was shaped like a big car. I bought a Vauxhall Royale. For me it was the equivalent of a Rolls-Royce. I went straight home and took the family for a drive. Bliss.

As for that Renault 4, I should think that it has now been usefully reconstituted as some tin cans.

James Whale presents Talk Radio's late evening show Monday to Thursday, 9pm to 1am, and also the 'Sunday Soapbox' 4pm to 6pm. He was talking to James Ruppert.

MOTORING

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237 BAR	1,800	1,000	1,000
885 BAR	1,800	1,000	1,000
82 BOK	4,200	1,800	1,000
80 CAM	2,800	1,800	1,145
COE 847V	328	1,800	1,500
CTE 77	1,400	1,151	1,200
DA 9728	1,800	1,800	3,000
844 DEC	1,200	1,800	1,800
881 349	1,500	1,200	1,000
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One man's palace is another's nightmare

Art deco, Swedish, Seventies... when it comes to selling a property, it seems that plain and simple is best. Penny Jackson questions the wisdom of imposing your own style



Swedish style: Sasha Waddell's home is a perfect example of the love of simplicity and symmetry displayed in her book

Photograph: Andrew Buurman

In the wood-panelled kitchen with floorboards painted in chequerboard squares of blue and white the feel is one of freshness and space. The quiet natural colours of the corridor merge into a sitting room that seems surprisingly large and light for a currow London house.

Then, from nowhere, a feature springs out as being remarkably familiar and a jigsaw of details gradually becomes a complete picture of Swedish design. Anyone who has pored over the ideas for panelling, shelving and artfully draped muslin is likely to have modelled their work on Sasha Waddell's Fulham home.

Her kitchen illustrates the chapter in her book *New Swedish Style* on painted floors; her fabric-lined bedroom on making curtains; the sitting room demonstrates the key elements of simplicity and symmetry. The flat cut-out balustrade that hides the ra-

diators, even the cat sunning itself on the day bed gives a sharp sense of déjà vu.

Although Waddell was inspired by the castles and manor houses of Sweden, she fell in love with the proportions of her Victorian house. Unusually she has not knocked through rooms to create more space but instead has used design, colour and the trick of bringing natural light to indoor windows to create an airy feel.

"Rooms that have been joined together often look elongated and out of sympathy with the rest of the house", she says. "Sections look fine, but you have to see the whole room. It's no good looking at wonderful photographs in magazines and copying all your favourite details in your own home. That would make a pig's ear of it."

As Sasha Waddell finds herself moving in a new design direction, so she needs another blank canvas for her work. And she

is not alone in wanting to start from scratch. The attractions of taking on a home that is unremarkable, plain, even dull, can be greater than acquiring something distinctive and exciting.

Buyers seem particularly intimidated by highly fashionable interiors that are inevitably a strong statement of someone's personality. "It would be like living with a stranger", remarked a woman after looking round one such apartment.

Nor are hearts necessarily won over by the no-expense-spared make-overs. The agents Douglas & Gordon recently had two identical flats for sale in west London. One has been featured in numerous magazines and is the last word in trendiness - wood block flooring, stainless steel and glass shelving and a dramatic use of colour. Its neighbour is painted magnolia with no memorable details. The magnolia flat sold

almost immediately, while the first had to be reduced in price. "If a buyer walks in and says 'wow', that's great. But if they don't, taking everything out is too much hassle," says James Robinson for the agents.

Peter Young of John D. Wood's Kensington office says if the wrong message is sent out, there's nothing you can do about it. "We had one house in which the main bedroom was painted completely black, with mirrors on the ceiling and sunken lights. In the middle was a brass bed with black, silk sheets. Men would joke about it, but the women were out of the house like a shot. We didn't sell the house."

If a style is easily reversible, there will normally be no problem finding a purchaser. Peter Young describes a Victorian house with a Japanese interior that is currently on the market for £1.9m as "an enor-

mously stylish blend of cultures. It has black painted floors and stark white walls with sliding screens of etched glass. But if the buyer doesn't like the black drawing-room floor, which has been taken back to the boards, it is easily covered up."

In west Hampstead, John D. Wood has on its books a flat that the owner has spent years turning into an art deco treasure. He has created an authentic setting for the furniture with an original fireplace, stained glass windows and black and white wooden floors. Even the hinges on certain doors were tracked down. But when can you charge a premium for a complete look and when does it become a drawback?

James Bailey, of Douglas & Gordon, recently found himself walking into a Seventies time-war. "From the moment you arrive at the front door with its plastic awning you are taken back more than 20

years. It was like walking into a film set. A lot of brown, grey and cream swirls and, of course, brown and orange. The main bedroom has silver wallpaper and deep mirrors on the wardrobes. But it was also architecturally interesting, going right up into the roof space. It also has a roof terrace and third-floor extension which they wouldn't be allowed to put in today." So how much for this Seventies gem? According to James Bailey, 95 per cent of people would rip everything out and start again. Instead of around £320,000 he would price it at less than £300,000. "People don't want to inherit someone's else character. But they'll pay through the nose for something clean and neutral."

Sasha Waddell's house is on the market at £320,000 through Fostons (0171 565 4000). Her design company, with Charles Codrington, 0171 498 9960.

Hymn to a village way of life

Vast changes have overtaken many districts of London. Robert Liebman looks at how the capital's villages have held up



Rural idyll: Penny Muir and her son Sam find peace and quiet in Crouch End, most definitely within the city of London

Photograph: Andrew Buurman

When Penny Muir and her then husband were house-hunting in the early 1980s, they insisted on an area that was urban and also suitable for raising three young sons. The order was tall, perhaps self-contradictory. It was resolved by Crouch End.

Now, thoughts about grandchildren would not be inappropriate. Her two eldest sons and her husband have long left the nest, and her youngest is a gap-year wing-flapper who, recently returned from an extended trip to the Middle East, has his sights set elsewhere.

Nestled in the Underground-free zone in north London between Archway, Highgate and Finsbury Park, Crouch End still blends urban ambience with pastoral peace. Alexandra Park, home to Alexandra Palace, is nearby, as is Parkland Walk, a former railway spur, now trackless and genuinely rusticated.

"Crouch End feels self-contained, and when you enter from Crouch End Hill, it suddenly appears almost dramatically in front of you. I certainly identify it as a distinct community," says Penny, a partner with solicitors Lewis Nadas in Camden Town.

The village-like flavour has numerous components: "Crouch End is an urban, not rural village. You don't feel

anonymous. Everything is to hand, within reach, in a manageable unit - manageable emotionally, not geographically," she says.

Most of what is to hand consists of a huge number of mostly ethnic restaurants in an amiable melting pot: "Crouch End is diverse ethnically but it all works well. My dry cleaners are Indian, my wine bar is run by Greek Cypriots, and many of the shopkeepers know me by name. It is a great pleasure on Saturday mornings when I go to my local bakery and bump into several people I know. It's comfortable living here."

Sam also feels that Crouch End reaches most of the parts required by a 19-year-old. Most

of his social life consists of visiting friends' houses and pubs, all of which are local. "Being on the outskirts makes Crouch End ruralised and green and suburban but you still have contact with the city. It is somehow insular. I leave only to go clubbing."

Over the years, says Penny, "a lot of houses have been converted into multiple occupancies. Many young couples have moved in - writers and advertising people. It is getting a Bohemian feel. There is still a good mixture - students, families who have been here for years, ethnics."

To this pastoral idyll, Toby Muir, 26, a disc jockey cum legal clerk cum decorator, inter-

jects a corrective in the form of "a little Socialist rant. Crouch End is a bowl, but it has changed. Haringey Council sold off many Georgian properties to the middle class. The working class has been bought out, with the council selling whatever was council-owned."

He admits, though, that it is no less of a village for this policy, only more " twee". His mother contends that "Crouch End does not have the poncey quality of Highgate and Hampstead."

Architect and town planner Terry Farrell notes that today's clocktowers are like the old village pumps, the focus of traditional English village life. "London is a set of villages for

definite genuine reasons," says Mr Farrell, who is an architect, urban planner, and chairman of UDAL, the Urban Design Alliance. "London and English cities generally are rural because the country's psyche is rural. Even the monarch lived out of town. London is rural because it genuinely grew from villages."

Mr Farrell notes that "London has no underlying urban pattern, except for the City, which is small." New York and the modern American model have a central downtown business area, and continental cities are denser, reflecting military needs and local political concerns. London is different from any other major city I can think of."

Many urban planners have noted that Londoners tend to end up where they began. When the time comes for Penny to put her house on the market, she warmly imagines, if money were no object, living in "an old-fashioned mansion-block flat in St John's Wood or Maida Vale, or Hampstead, the kind of elegant flat doesn't exist in Crouch End. I'll be happy to stay here, and that is probably what will happen."

Lewis Nadas, 24 Camden High Street, London NW1: 0171-387 2032; UDAL, c/o RIBA, 66 Portland Place, London W1N 4AD; 0171 580 5533; Terry Farrell, 17 Hatton Street, London. NW3 8PL: 0171 258 3433.



PENNY JACKSON

Rental market stays slim

A shortage of good quality property to rent is a complaint that still rumbles on. There may be new investors and a greater professionalism in the sector but good selling prices also beckon. The calmer mood in the market suggests to those owners who have been waiting for the right time to sell, that the green light is not going to get much greener.

According to the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors there are also those who are put off by the cost of complying with furniture safety regulations. And from the tenants' point of view when they do finally get themselves installed they would like to be able to take a lease that is longer than the usual six months. A third of surveyors say that there is a demand for a new Assured Longhold Tenancy.

When an historic house in Hampstead village in London comes on to the rental market the chances of beating the corporate competition are slim. The agents Behr & Butchoff found themselves in the middle of a bidding battle

for an 18th century listed house. The two rivals - a bank and an oil company - were bringing top executives and their families over from the US. The bank wound up the winner and is paying £4,000 a week in rent, making it the most expensive let in Hampstead. The oil company has to do some explaining to its president and his family.

Wates Built Homes are now giving buyers of detached houses a chance to get in on the ground floor when it comes to layout and design. They will be able to say what they want in structural layout, interior design, the garden and the method of purchase. Using the Imprint service, a buyer can ask for a major alteration such as a wall or something as small as a light fitting to be moved. Developers have learned that it pays to have the purchaser's input early on. Wates will juggle colours on room-by-room drawing boards and in the garden, herbaceous beds and smart patios can be ditched in favour of children's play areas if necessary.

The benefits of buying to let

Demand is growing for good rental property and there is money to be made, writes
Ginetta Vedrickas

At the risk of being banned from Butlins, can you spot a connection between Margaret Thatcher and the mother-in-law?

Malcolm Harrison, spokesperson for the Association of Residential Lettings Agents (ARLA) thinks he can. He links the Iron Lady and the gradual demise of old-style comedians' favourite person to his industry's current success.

"Margaret Thatcher pushed many into buying who otherwise may not have," Mr Harrison says. "Couples tend not to marry these days, there's not that pressure from the mother-in-law, so they rent rather than buy."

Is renting preferable to buying? And why are investors buying to let? The London lettings scene is complex and it's hard to have an overview of a market encapsulating corporate and private tenants.

Private rentals in the UK run at around 11 per cent compared to France or Germany's 40 per cent. Rates are rising and pre-Budget jitters now seem like unnecessary angst.

One agent confided: "We've been praying and waiting to see if that nice Mr Brown was going to hammer us. We're breathing sighs of relief as he's been pretty neutral about lettings and there are minor advantages in the small print." Buying British is obviously endemic but are things changing?

Many agents believe that buyers now delay until their mid-30s because of an increasing need for mobility. "Couples are too busy working these days, frequently on short contracts, so they rent for flexibility. They don't want the hassle of coming home and finding the drains blocked, they leave that to the landlord," says Malcolm Harrison, who sites divorce and separation rates as additional influences.

Susan Fitz-Gibbon, owner of Fitz-Gibbon Residential, has clients in all sectors of the market. Covering west London from Kensington out to Hampton, Susan credits the big boys for an expanding market. "The corporates are coming out of the woodwork and they will pay up to £1,200 per week for good-



Houses galore: but it's still easier to find somewhere to buy than a quality place to rent

Photograph: David Rose

sized family homes. They're bringing in new people and previously slashed allowances are going up."

Susan has six clients chasing each property and many are let the same day. Investors are keen to buy in an area that is cheaper than prime London heartland and yields a greater return, so the suburbs are popular. "We aim for at least 10 per cent," says Susan. "But there's a huge need for more people to let."

Landlords who bought at peak prices sold once the market revived, leaving a paucity of middle market rental property.

ARLA and seven members in the Council for Mortgage Lenders launched the "Buy to Let" scheme 18 months ago to boost rentals. With investors able to borrow at 6.99 per cent fixed for three years, the scheme has helped to bring good quality properties onto the market. Andrew Reeves, a Bromley lettings agent, says: "You won't find granny's cast-off squinty carpets in these flats. They are aimed at thirties professionals in sound employment who are happy to rent providing standards are good."

But is the new investor a Rachman wannabe? "We've finally killed him off. Your average landlord is in his forties or fifties," says Malcolm Harrison. "He's got his PEPs and his Tassos, Aunt Agatha dies

and he's got a bit of surplus. He wants an investment he can walk past, he doesn't want to put it in Nick Leeson's pocket and have it floating off to Tokyo."

Jo Kinson, 31, doesn't quite fit the stereotype. She does have the maximum amount of Tassos and PEPs and chose the buy to let scheme to give her portfolio a "broader base of investment". Jo found that she would get the best return on a one-bedroom flat in west London, a popular area for rentals. Was the process complex? "I can't believe how easy it's been. I got a buy-to-let mortgage over the phone, handed over to the lettings agent and within two weeks a South African professional moved in straight from his hotel."

Jo's return is around 12 per cent and she is looking for a second property for herself and another for a friend overseas. Has she any tips? "Find a flat that needs minimal upkeep and decorate it in neutral colours. Mine looks incredibly fresh and if there's a choice of properties you know that yours will rent first."

Angela Folan, another investor through the scheme, agrees. Her two Bromley flats with monthly rentals of £475 and £550 currently bring returns of 10 and 12 per cent. Angela is happy for agents to manage her flats and hopes to take over when her children are bigger

so that "it will be like a job". Any problems so far? "My only regret is not doing it sooner. Years ago my bank manager pooch-pooched the idea of a housewife doing such a thing, but this time it was so easy."

Brendan Binerman, a psychiatrist, will be working in Camberwell, London for two years and is renting a one-bed flat nearby for £500 a month. Was it easy to find somewhere? "It was much harder than I thought. Agents were hopeless and didn't marry up the right sorts of properties with tenants. I was turned down because I smoke and was shocked to find some flats turned out to be council properties and were very dodgy."

Are couples impulsive about the sort of property they rent? Nadine Morgan, the Institute of Psychiatry's accommodation officer, helps visitors find short-let rentals and frequently sees aspirations shift downwards. "Visitors come for six months and hope that relatives will visit. Initially they want a two-bed but when they discover the cost they swiftly change to a one-bed and say relatives can sleep on the sofa."

Buy to Let hotline: 01923 896555, Monday-Friday 9am-5.30pm; Fitz-Gibbon Residential, 0181 892 8921; Andrew Reeves, 0181 464 8566.

Investing in property? Look for a spot in demand

Although rental incomes have not risen in line with sales values, there is still money to be made, writes Mary Wilson

Investing in property is a capital idea, providing you buy wisely in a good location. Although rental yields – the annual rental as a percentage of a home's value – have not risen in line with sales values over the past 18 months, they still represent a good return compared with money in the bank.

In general, yields are currently around 7 or 8 per cent gross, but there are pockets all around the country where higher returns are achievable. And although yields might be down compared with two years ago, the value of your property will have risen significantly.

The secret is to buy a property for which there is a huge demand. This might be one- or two-bedroom flats in London, a five-bedroom house in Surrey or a three-bedroom terraced house in the North-west. Good prospects should be had in a city where there is a continual turnover of employees, all looking to rent while they are on short-term contracts; somewhere with a university or college or an up and coming area, where purchase prices are low enough to produce a high percentage return.

In London, the traditional investment areas – Knightsbridge, Kensington, Chelsea, Mayfair – will produce a steady, but at the most an 8 per cent, return on your money. "It is difficult now to get double figures in London, but there are little pockets such as the Docklands and the City where it is still possible," says Jonathan Vandermolen of Blenheim Bishop. "Small apartments with one or two bedrooms will produce the best results, especially good one-bedders."

He is selling a new development in Warren Street, W1, which should produce a higher than usual rental return. "It is not in a prime residential area, so capital outlay is lower, but it is close enough to Oxford Circus to achieve 10 per cent," he says.

There is also a shortage of genuine loft space (former industrial properties with large open spaces) in London available for rent. "Gross investment yields on this type of property in City fringe areas such as Clerkenwell and Shoreditch are often in excess of 12 per cent," says Clive Martin, residential lettings manager with Stirling Ackroyd.

City suburbs that are well located should produce satisfactory returns and sometimes a good quality, newly built development in an area that is easily accessible to London and the airport will see higher than usual rental returns. But remember when agents quote possible yields to take account not only of all charges and expenses, but also possible void periods, which make a considerable dent in your income.

At Wentworth Gate, a Barrat development of apartments, town houses and large detached houses in Ascot, Surrey, some properties are set to achieve up to 12 per cent returns. "Homes in certain parts of Surrey which are near to the American schools are achieving very good premiums because of the high demand and lack of supply," says Lynne Mayell of Knight Frank, which is letting some of the properties.

"People who have bought early in the development will do best. Although returns might be a bit lower to start with because of the building, once that has finished the rents will go up," she says.

The good news for all those people who do not live south of Walsford is that areas in the north are hot spots, too. According to a recent survey conducted by Mortgage Express, the North-west is currently the best place in the buy-to-let property market.

"These areas are popular because of the rental incomes that can be achieved," says Tim Dawson, deputy managing director. "The North-west leads the field because it has the added attraction that the investment required to buy properties is lower than many other regions across the UK."

The survey shows that the most popular property to buy for investment in general across the UK is a two- or three-bedroom terraced house. Two- or three-bedroom post-1960 terraced houses come second, followed closely by flats and maisonettes.

"There is a lot of investment around Manchester," says Paul Heath of broker Langmore James Association. "Three- to five-bedroom terraced properties are all showing net returns of around 10 per cent. In Warrington, it is the two-up-two-downs which are showing the highest. Hamptons has been monitoring rental properties around the county and the top spots are the Colswolds, where a two-bedroom cottage in 1997 produced a gross yield of 6.75 per cent (with a 10 per cent increase in capital value). Beaconsfield where four-bedroom houses achieved over 10 per cent and Amersham, where a two-bedroom house achieved an 8 per cent yield."

"These good returns are largely led by the number of applicants in the area," says Annabel Barnes, director of country lettings. "Certain parts of Surrey and Berkshire are particularly popular with relocating employees, mostly Americans, who all want the right house on the right bus route near the right school. There isn't enough to go round, so they will pay big premiums."

Safe as houses – if you've a good builder

A trusty handyman can be the first line of defence against looming problems, writes
Robert Liebman

Through wonky windows, builders reveal their mettle.

After 20 years of neglect, a four-bedroom semi-detached house in south-west London was being thoroughly overhauled for new owners. Workers were fixing floors and renewing walls when builder Terry Gauntlett, replacing a rotten first-floor window, saw that a fungus was among them.

Dry rot is a mushroom-like infestation which, if left untreated, could develop into a serious, and seriously expensive, problem. Mr Gauntlett informed the owner, who immediately hired specialists. The infestation was localised, and the extra expense and mess were barely noticeable.

In Ealing, meanwhile, the surveyor for first-time buyers Loretta and Neil said that their windows needed replacing. Their handyman, Peter Daines, suggested a second opinion, namely, his own. "He examined the windows in the neighbouring houses, saw that they were original and told us ours could be fixed too," says Loretta. "He saved us hundreds of pounds, and now we are doing or work in the house which 'eviously couldn't afford."

Among the legions of gen-builders and handymen, some are legions of homeowners. They belong to no trade associations, but neither are cowboys. Mr Gauntlett is a member of certain trade associations whose qualifications consist in doing more than paying a fee. Cowboys conceal their dodgy pasts and knock on strangers' doors. Legitimate builders thrive on recommen-

dations and are often too busy to serve new clients.

"We found Mr Daines through a friend of my mother," says Loretta, who notes that he was recommended for being helpful as well as skilful. When the couple restored their fireplaces, Mr Daines brought them tiles from the large collection of timber, doors and other discards that he has squirreled away over the years. "The tiles were old and old-fashioned, which was perfect for our living room. We never would have found such attractive and inexpensive tiles on our own."

She credits him, too, for his solution for their bowed interior wall. Instead of rebuilding the wall, "he installed a picture rail to attract the eye. It's a visual distraction which hides the bowing."

Cosmetic work is not always innocent or advisable. Mr Daines says that he often has to undo earlier work done on the cheap, "especially work done in the wrong sequence. Many people can't afford full refurbishment, so they do the cosmetic work first, then when the building work is done, it ruins the cosmetic work."

Some builders excel as skive artists: "One homeowner hired me to fix a leak but I could not find the hot and cold valves. Finally I found them under some tiles. Obviously, a handyman had loosened the holding nuts on the valves and crisscrossed them over one another to lie flatter and closer to the wall. He wasn't doing plumbing. He was tiling, and when he found obstacles, he simply tiled over them."

Most British properties are old and, Mr Daines stresses, have had a succession of builders as well as owners. Some of these handymen have covered rather than corrected, resulting in what he refers to as "laminated concealment".

Fortunately, symptoms usually appear before total failure, enabling owners to budget for their repair or replacement. Mr Daines favours a shake test: "Things should fit solidly. I

shake things – radiators, countertops, banisters, windows, all sorts of things. If something is loose, there's probably a problem." Simple visual inspection is also informative. "If something is old, its time may have come. A radiator that is 20 years old is going to need replacing soon. Twenty-year-old radiators also look their age."

However, sometimes even the best jack-of-all-trades handyman doesn't suffice, whether for reasons of true specialist quality, safety or legality. Electric shock, fire or carbon monoxide poisoning are too steep a price to pay.

By law, cooker installation and other gas fittings must be done by a fitter registered with Corgi, the Council for Registered Gas Installers. Some electrical work is also legally required, and even simple wiring jobs require professional expertise. A major fire can start from a poorly wired hall light as easily as from a faulty fuse box. With electrical work, warns Mr Gauntlett, "all you see is a plug, you don't see the wires behind." This normally sceptical builder strongly recommends using a member of the NICEIC, the electricians' association.

For their part, owners must exercise vigilance and self-servicence.

* References, references, references – good, honest reliable workers leave a trail of recommendations. Ask for references; don't hesitate to interview several builders and get quotes from each.

* Advance payments? The Federation of Master Builders asserts that "advance payments, particularly at the start of a job, should be avoided." Mr Gauntlett asserts, "don't pay until the work is done. People volunteer to pay me all or part in advance, thousands of pounds. Many people want to part with their money. I say, 'No, pay me at the end or as the work is done.'"

* Pay as you go, pay as it has been earned.

* Most trade associations have genuine membership qualifi-



Warming tales: Loretta and Neil were saved a lot of money by their builder, who also found their old tiles for their fireplaces

Photograph: Philip Meach

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